



## ***DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE***

***2.00 PM MONDAY, 17 APRIL 2023***

***MULTI LOCATION MEETING  
COUNCIL CHAMBER/MICROSOFT TEAMS***

**All mobile telephones to be switched to silent for the duration of the meeting**

This meeting will be recorded for broadcast via the Council's Internet Site. By participating you are consenting to being filmed and the possible use of those images and sound recordings for training purposes.

### **PART 1**

1. Declarations of Interest
2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (*Pages 3 - 6*)
3. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Final Report 2023/24 (*Pages 7 - 14*)
4. Assessment of Resources to support the Democratic Services Function (*Pages 15 - 24*)
5. Forward Work Programme (*Pages 25 - 26*)
6. Urgent Items  
Any urgent items at the discretion of the Chairperson pursuant to Section 100BA(6)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

**K.Jones**  
**Chief Executive**

**Civic Centre**  
**Port Talbot**

**11<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**Committee Membership:**

**Chairperson:**      **Councillor S.Rahaman**

**Vice**  
**Chairperson:**      **Councillor N.Goldup-John**

**Councillors:**      W.Carpenter, J.Hale, M.Harvey, J.Henton,  
A.R.Lockyer, A.Lodwig, P.A.Rees, P.Rogers,  
C.Williams and S.Thomas

## Democratic Services Committee

(Multi-Location Meeting – Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft Teams)

**Members Present:**

**13 February 2023**

**Chairperson:** Councillor S.Rahaman

**Vice Chairperson:** Councillor N.Goldup-John

**Councillors:** W.Carpenter, J.Hale, M.Harvey, J.Henton, P.A.Rees and P.Rogers

**Officers In Attendance** C.Griffiths, A.James, S.Curran, T.Rees and A.Thomas

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1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

3. **Public Participation Strategy**

The Public Participation Strategy has been developed in response to a requirement from the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Members were informed that feedback forms can be accessed online or alternatively hard copies can be requested from officers.

Members noted the item for information.

4. **Member's Annual Reports**

Members were presented with information relating to Member's Annual Reports, as detailed within the report circulated.

Members noted the report for information.

5. **Members Personal Development Reviews**

Members were presented with information relating to Members Personal Development Reviews.

Resolved: Having due regard to the fact that no integrated impact assessment is required that the Democratic Services Committee:

- Note the Members Personal Development Review Scheme - Approve that the Democratic Services Manager will communicate with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and political groups to explore a cohort of current members to undertake the training to conduct Personal Development Reviews.
- Approve that the Democratic Services Manager will communicate with all Members via email, reminding them of the scheme and inviting them to complete a Personal Development Review should they so wish.

6. **Annual Survey of Members**

Members were presented with information relating to the Annual Survey of Members as detailed within the report circulated.

Resolved: That an annual survey be conducted with all elected members between February and April 2023.

- The content of the annual survey IS based on the draft attached at appendix 1.
- That the survey be conducted on a 1:1 basis by Democratic Services staff.

7. **Timings of Meetings**

Members were presented with information relating to the timings of meetings, as detailed within the report circulated.

Members were advised that the majority view is often considered in relation to information obtained. The committee will also be informed of the views obtained and can determine how they wish to proceed.

Resolved:           That the Committee note the update in relation to Timings of Meetings.

- That the Committee endorse the inclusion of 'Timings of Meetings' questions to be included in the Annual Member Survey.

8. **Forward Work Programme 22/23**

Members noted the Forward Work Programme.

9. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

**CHAIRPERSON**

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## NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Democratic Services Committee

17<sup>th</sup> April 2023

### Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services – Mr Craig Griffiths

#### Matter for Decision

#### Wards Affected:

All wards

#### Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales 2023/24

#### Purpose of the Report:

To advise Members of the Democratic Services Committee of the content of the final Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales for the civic year 2023/2024.

The link to the annual report is [Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales - Annual Report - February 2023](#)

#### Background:

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) exercises powers set out in various legislation and can also make recommendations. It has the power to set the level of remuneration payable to elected members and co-opted members of local authorities. It has also been given a general power to review councils' pay policy statements as far as they relate to heads of paid service, extended on a temporary basis to chief officers of principal authorities

## **Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales**

Each year, and before making its final determinations for the next civic year, the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales publishes a draft report and invites comments on its draft proposals. The proposals proposed for the civic year 2023-24 were considered by this Committee in November 2022 and the following comments were forwarded to the IRPW:

From the Head of Democratic Services, Mrs Stacy Curran:

“As the Head of Democratic Services to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (“the Council”), I acknowledge receipt of your Draft Annual Report.

A copy of this draft report was taken to the Council’s Democratic Services Committee on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022 for their comment and consideration and the members of the Democratic Services Committee note your proposals.

As the Council’s Head of Democratic Service, I am supportive of the increased proposed to the basic salary and senior salaries of elected members. A growing number of our elected members are of working age where the basic salary is their sole income. Remuneration must be sufficient to enable those members to carry out their role.

In terms of those receiving senior salary, whilst accepting that arrangements may vary from council to council, our local position is that the responsibilities shouldered by those in these roles and the hours worked have increased sharply. In addition to the significant service and policy changes necessary to respond to the cost of living crisis, the recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic and the Ukraine (among others), members are increasingly involved in complex partnership arrangements at the local, regional and national level.

I also attach the Council’s response to your set questions as part of the consultation.”

A copy of the consultation responses as agreed at the November meeting of the Democratic Services Committee are attached at Appendix 1.



The IRPW has now published its final proposals for the civic year 2023-24 and Members are asked to note that proposals are unchanged from those contained in the draft report.

The proposed changes that would affect the existing arrangements in this Council are summarised in the table below:

<b>Element of Remunerations</b>	<b>2022/2023</b>	<b>Proposed by IRPW for 2023/2024</b>
Basic Salary	£16,800	£17,600
Leader	£56,700	£59,400
Deputy Leader	£39,906	£41, 580
Executive Members	£34,020	£35,640
Chairs of Committee	£25,593	£26,400
Leader of largest opposition Group	£25,593	£26,400
Leader of other Political Group	£20,540	£21,340
Civic Head	£25,593	£26,400
Deputy Civic Head	£20,540	£21,340

The Panel has re-emphasised the need for Democratic Services Committees to ensure that all elected members are given the support necessary for them to fulfil their duties effectively

### **Financial Impacts:**

The proposals would be contained within the budget provision.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment:**

A beneficial impact in attracting people from diverse backgrounds to stand for election as councillors.

**Valleys Communities Impacts:**

There are no valley community impacts

**Workforce Impacts:**

There are no workforce impacts associated with this reports.

**Legal Impacts:**

The Panel are exercising powers set out in Part 8 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, as amended by the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 and the Local Government (Wales) Act 2015.

**Risk Management Impacts:**

Any proposed increased to Member remuneration has the potential to attract public criticism at a time of severe and enduring austerity. The Panel acknowledge this in making its proposals but point to the workloads and responsibilities being borne by elected Members as justification for the proposed changes.

**Consultation:**

All Members were sent a copy of the draft Report. The Committee and the Head of Democratic Services wrote, on behalf of the Chair and Committee to the IRPW, summarising Members' views on the draft proposals as outlined above

**Recommendations:**

Members of the Democratic Services Committee are invited to note the contents of the final Annual Report issued by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

**Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

To note the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' Annual Report to inform arrangements for the 2023/24 Civic Year.

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Consultation Questions response to the IRPW Draft Report November 2022

**List of Background Papers:**

None

**Officer Contact:**

Craig Griffiths  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
Tel: 01639 763767 or E-mail: [c.griffiths2@npt.gov.uk](mailto:c.griffiths2@npt.gov.uk)

Stacy Curran  
Democratic Services Manager (Head of Democratic Services)  
Tel: 01639 763194 or E-mail: [s.curran@npt.gov.uk](mailto:s.curran@npt.gov.uk)

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### Question 1

The Panel has continued to use the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) published by the Office for National Statistics as the benchmark for setting the basic salary of elected members of principal councils. There is a corresponding proportionate increase proposed for the members of National Park and Fire and Rescue Authorities. The Panel has continued to refer to the last published ASHE which was 2021. Do you agree that the basic salary element should be referenced to the ASHE 2021 data?

**Yes**

No

No Opinion

Any Additional Comments

The Authority believes that linking salaries to the AHSE 2021 ensures an independence and clarity for payments to Councillors. It helps ensure that the former 'Race to the Bottom' approach by Authorities will not be returned to by putting in place a clear mechanism of how salaries are calculated.

### Question 2

The Panel has made changes to the payment of costs and expenses of members of community and town councils. Do you agree with the addition of the "consumables" element?

**Yes**

No

No Opinion

Any Additional Comments

It ensures that Community / Town Councillors are reasonably remunerated for such costs.

### Question 3

The Panel will gather evidence from principal councils to explore whether and how the workload of elected members has changed to inform future Determinations. Are you content that the Panel should build this review into its future work plan and build the evidence base to support decisions?

**Yes**

No

No Opinion

## Any Additional Comments

The creation of evidence-based decisions ensures that remuneration levels are appropriate and reasonable.

### Question 4

We have significantly reduced the size of the report this year to concentrate on key decisions made and intend to make more use of the website to provide easy to use guidance to users. This approach is also in line with our efforts to respect the challenges facing us in protecting our planet. How would you like to access information and guidance from the Panel? (choose all that apply)

Summary report with links to detailed guidance

Social media

Easy to use guidance notes

Information events

Frequently asked questions

Website

Other

If Other, Please Specify:

Detailed, easy to use guidance notes together with frequently asked questions on the IRPW website would be welcomed.

### Question 5

The Panel intend to undertake a series of engagements with all relevant stakeholders over the next year as part of the development of its forward planning and building of its evidence and research strategy. Have you any comments that would help the Panel shape this engagement? For example, a preference for online polls, the holding of engagement events, virtual or face to face, which groups should be involved, how do we engage with prospective candidates etc.

A mix of approaches are welcomed.

## NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

17th April 2023

#### Report of the Head of Democratic Services

#### Matter for Decision

**Wards Affected:** All wards

#### **Democratic Services – Assessment of Resources to support the Democratic Services Function**

#### **Purpose of the Report:**

1. To report the outcome of an assessment of the adequacy of resources to support the Democratic Services Function.

#### **Background:**

2. The Head of Democratic Services has a statutory responsibility to organise the discharge of the “democratic services functions” in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, which includes:
  - The production of reports, as required, on the number of staff required to support democratic services and how the staff should be organised to ensure the Council, the Cabinet and Committees receive high-level support in the discharge of its democratic functions.

3. The structure chart in Appendix 1 sets out the current structure of the Democratic Services Team.
4. Since March 2022, there have been a number of changes / developments that have affected the workload of Democratic Services:
  - a. The local government elections of May 2022 resulted in a large number of new members and a change to the Council's administration. The administrative, training and induction requirements surrounding this were extensive and are ongoing.
  - b. The introduction of legislated hybrid meetings following the Covid-19 emergency has had and continues to have a direct impact on the workload of Democratic Services. Use of remote technologies is requiring all those involved in supporting, chairing or participating in meetings to learn and maintain new skills. Direct support has been provided by Democratic Services to elected members and officers and it continues to significantly impact on the workload of the team. The preparations for meetings has increased significantly as well as the support required during the meetings.
  - c. IT support to Members and Officers now forms a significant part of the role of the Democratic Services Team.
  - d. Simultaneous Welsh translation at Council meetings has been introduced.
  - e. Turnover in staffing in the Scrutiny Team, resulting in ongoing recruitment and induction.
  - f. The Senior Scrutiny and Project Management Officer will be taking Maternity Leave in June 2023 and cover will be ring-fenced to the Democratic Services Team.



- g. The subsequent vacant post will be advertised, however recruiting to a temporary post can be problematic.
  - h. Audit Wales will be conducting a review into the Scrutiny Arrangements of the Council in April 2023, the findings of which could have a significant impact on the workload of the team.
5. In addition to the above, significant new duties have accompanied the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 including: mandatory webcasting of all Council meetings; mandatory petition schemes; a duty to create a public participation scheme that will strengthen public involvement in the democratic process; and further development of family absence provisions for elected members.
  6. The Democratic Services function of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee is being undertaken by Neath Port Talbot as well the ongoing work supporting the Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee. The logistics and practicalities of supporting joint and regional committees with members across separate Councils and other agencies is proving resource intensive and administratively challenging.
  7. The Forward Work Planning mechanisms of the Council have been significantly enhanced to ensure robust and planned decision making which has resulted in a sharp increase to the workload to support the administrative requirements surrounding this.
  8. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) have in addition launched their own programme of work, including their Diversity in Democracy Programme that will impact on the work of the Democratic Services Team.

9. Following the Local Government Elections in May 2022, focus has now moved from induction to the development of a member-training programme, which is facilitated by the Democratic Services Team.
10. Neath Port Talbot has a number of significant projects within the County Borough ongoing at present, such as the Afan Valley Adventure Resort, GCRE and has recently been successful in its Freeport bid. Any forums and meetings within these projects will bring with it its own governance framework and it is highly likely the Democratic Services Team will be asked to support the administration of such meetings. Therefore, ongoing consideration must be given to the resourcing of such meetings and future reports will be brought to members in the event of any decisions required in respect of resource allocations
11. As part of the Annual Survey, Members will be asked for feedback on the support received and any feedback will be built into service improvement, which could impact the workload of the Democratic Services Team.
12. Taken together, these developments will continue to increase the workload of Democratic Services and include ongoing changes to the role of the team.

## **Assessment of Resources**

13. The structure of the Democratic Services Team is attached at appendix 1.
14. The Grade 5 post is vacant and will remain to allow for a vacancy management budget contribution.

15. There has been some disruption due to short and medium term sickness absence. The Democratic Services Team is responsible for the facilitation of statutory Council meetings so in the case of sickness absence, the work must be covered by another member of the team which adds to already significant workloads. This is currently proactively managed but ongoing pressure could result in increased instances of staff absences which exacerbates the issue.
16. It is the view of the Head of Democratic Services that the workload and demand on the team is consistent and increasing. Whilst there is sufficient support within the team to support the Democratic Services Function at present, the ongoing pressure to support additional areas of work is unsustainable. The Team are working at capacity and the pressure of further added responsibilities will have a detrimental impact on staff wellbeing and potential increased levels of sickness absence. The quality of existing work is also likely to suffer which will have a detrimental impact on the standard of legal documents such as minutes and decision notices supporting the soundness of Council decisions.

**Financial Impact:**

17. The financial costs of the Democratic Services Team are met within existing salary budgets across the responsibilities of the Chief Executive's Directorate.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

18. No impact.

**Workforce Impact:**

19. This report states the current workload of the Democratic Services Team.

### **Risk Management:**

20. Continued pressure on the Democratic Services Team could lead to work related stress and the ongoing pace could result in the quality of the work undertaken diminishing.

### **Legal Powers:**

21. Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.  
Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

### **Consultation:**

22. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

### **Recommendations:**

23. That the Democratic Services Committee endorse the Democratic Services structure set out in Appendix 1 and notes the report.

### **Reason for Decision**

24. To enable the Head of Democratic Services to discharge the statutory duty placed upon her as set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

### **Appendices:**

25. Appendix 1 – Current structure chart - March 2023

## **List of Background Papers:**

26 None

### **Officer Contact:**

Mrs Stacy Curran, Head of Democratic Services

e-mail: [s.curran@npt.gov.uk](mailto:s.curran@npt.gov.uk)

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# Democratic Services

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Democratic Services Manager /  
Head of Democratic Services  
Grade 12

Senior Scrutiny and Project  
Management Officer  
Grade 9

Senior Committee Administration  
Officer  
Grade 9

Democratic Services Officer  
Grade 7

Democratic Services Officer  
Grade 7

Democratic Services Officer  
Grade 7

Democratic Services Officer  
Grade 7

Democratic Services Officer  
Grade 7

Democratic Services Assistant  
Grade 5 (VACANT)

Democratic Services Officer  
Grade 7 (0.8 FTE)





**Democratic Committee Services**  
**Forward Work Programme 2022/23**

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
29 <sup>th</sup> November 2022	Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report – February 2023	Decision	Craig Griffiths
	Handling Harassment Abuse and Intimidation	Information	Craig Griffiths / Stacy Curran
13 <sup>th</sup> February 2023	Member Annual Reports	Decision	Craig Griffiths / Stacy Curran
	Members PDRs	Decision	Craig Griffiths / Stacy Curran
	Member Training and Development Priorities for upcoming year and Annual Member Survey	Decision	Craig Griffiths / Stacy Curran
	Timing of Meetings Survey	Information	Craig Griffiths / Stacy Curran

	IRPW Final Report (if available)	Information	Craig Griffiths / Stacy Curran
	Public Participation Strategy	Decision	Craig Griffiths / Stacy Curran
17 <sup>th</sup> April 2023	IRPW Final Report (if available)	Information	Craig Griffiths / Stacy Curran
	Assessment of Resources for Democratic Services	Information	Craig Griffiths / Stacy Curran

2023/2024

- Annual Review of E-Petitions/Public Speaking
- Review Diversity in Democracy Action Plan
- Democratic Services Committee Annual Report
- Bring back results of member survey and training needs
- Draft Protocol for research & member support (WLGA)
- Draft charter (WLGA)