

**Democratic Services Committee**

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

**Members Present:**

**27 November 2023**

**Chairperson:** Councillor S.Rahaman

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

**Councillors:** M.Harvey, A.R.Lockyer, A.Lodwig, P.A.Rees, S.H.Reynolds, P.Rogers and C.Williams

**Officers In Attendance** C.Griffiths, S.Curran and P.Chivers

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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 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.

3. **Forward Work Programme**

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

4. **Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report 2024**

The Democratic Services Manager provided an overview of the report contained in the agenda pack. The proposals by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, if implemented, would impact Member remuneration in the civic year 2024/2025.

**Resolved:** That the Committee considers and comments on the Determinations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in their draft Annual Report for 2024/25.

**Resolved:** That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to make a response on behalf of the Democratic Service Committee reflecting the decision and comments made at the meeting, to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

**Resolved:** That the Head of Democratic Services issue Question 4 of the consultation document to all elected Members and co-opted members for them to respond to individually.

## 5. Member Annual Reports

The Democratic Services Manager provided an overview of the report contained in the agenda pack and reminded members that support was available for any member who wished to produce an annual report.

Members asked how many annual reports have been produced since the last election.

The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that only a very small amount of annual reports had been produced and all annual reports are published on the council website. It was noted that current technology may allow for members feedback to be produced in various other formats.

**Resolved:** It is recommended that, having due regard that no integrated impact assessment is required that the Democratic Services Committee note the Members Annual Report Scheme and that the Democratic Services Manager communicates with all Members via email, reminding them of the scheme and inviting them to complete an Annual Report should they so wish.

## 6. Member Personal Development Reviews

The Democratic Services Manager provided an overview of the report contained in the agenda pack and outlined the current policy in relation to the Members Annual Development Review process.

**Resolved:** It is recommended, that 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
- Approves that the Democratic Services Manager will communicate with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGGA) and political groups to explore a cohort of current members to undertake the training to conduct Personal Development Reviews.
- Approves 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.

7. **Proposal to establish a Task and Finish Group on Handling Harassment, Abuse and Intimidation for Councillors**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services provided an overview of the report contained in the agenda pack and outlined the proposal to establish a Task and Finish Group.

Members welcomed the establishment of a Task and Finish Group and commented that there had been a change in terms of people's actions and attitudes since the pandemic with increased levels of online abuse. Members noted that it would be useful to look at information that may be available in the education sphere and to identify why there has been a change in culture and any underlying issues.

**Resolved:** It is recommended that Democratic Services Committee: Approve the establishment of a Task and Finish Group of the Democratic Services Committee to focus on handling harassment abuse and intimidation for Councillors while promoting Councillor safety at a local level.

8. **Proposal to establish a Task and Finish Group on Diversity in Democracy.**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services outlined the proposal to establish a Task and Finish Group in respect of updating the

Council's Diversity in Democracy Action Plan. If approved, the Diversity in Democracy Task and Finish group and the Harassment, Abuse and Intimidation Task and Finish group would run concurrently.

Members asked if external organisations could be invited to participate under the Task and Finish group remit.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that external organisations could be invited under the remit of the Task and Finish Group to ensure the group is as wide ranging as possible and it will be for members of Task and Finish Group to determine whom they might wish to consider hearing from.

**Resolved:** It is recommended that Democratic Services Committee approve the establishment of a Task and Finish Group of the Democratic Services Committee to focus on developing the next phase of Diversity in Democracy for the Council, considering national developments and local priorities.

## 9. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

**Cllr. S Rahaman  
CHAIRPERSON**