

## Democratic Services Committee

(Hybrid - Conference Room, Port Talbot Civic Centre and Microsoft Teams)

**Members Present:**

**8 April 2024**

**Chairperson:** Councillor S.Rahaman

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

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

**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 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.

3. **Forward Work Programme**

Officers advised members that this meeting was the last in the cycle of meetings for the current civic year. New meeting dates and forward work programme would be advised following the Council Annual General Meeting in May.

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

4. **Independent Remuneration Panel Wales Final Report**

Officers provided members with a brief overview of the report contained within the agenda pack.

This item was noted.

5. **Democratic Services Committee Annual Report**

Resolved: That the Democratic Services Committee note and endorse the Annual Report 2023/24 attached at Appendix 1 and commend the same to Council.

6. **Task and Finish Scoping; Dealing with Harassment and Intimidation and Diversity in Democracy**

The committee agreed at the meeting held on 27th November, to establish two Task & Finish Groups in relation to Dealing with Harassment and Intimidation and Diversity in Democracy.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services outlined details of the Dealing with Harassment and Intimidation scoping document as contained in the agenda report pack, focusing on the key questions, intended outcomes and potential group membership. It was suggested that the first meeting should take place during the latter half of May, where a round table discussion could be held to identify member's issues. It was noted that a Diversity in Democracy Action Plan was published in 2021 prior to the Local Government Elections in 2022. The aim of the Task and Finish Group would be to review the action plan and identify ways that it could be promoted by Council. It was noted that meetings of both Task & Finish groups could be held concurrently.

Members stated that it may be appropriate to open up the invitation to partner agencies and noted that Crime Prevention Officers within South Wales Police were available to provide advice on home security and personal safety to members. Members felt that discussions on both topics were timely, and it would be helpful to discuss diversity in advance of the next local government elections. There needs to be a focus as a Council, on what actions can be

taken to address the change in culture and identify the routes that intimidation and harassment can take.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that this can be included as a fourth question in the scoping document.

Members questioned the potential size of the Task & Finish groups.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that there was no plan to limit the size of the groups, but this was dependent on the level of interest received. If a large number of members expressed an interest, the committee may need to consider alternative methods of facilitation; if unmanageable the scope may need to be narrowed.

The Chair questioned whether the meetings would be held as hybrid or face to face meetings. Members commented that the topic matter was more suited to face-to face discussion.

The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that as the Task & Finish meetings are not convened under legislation, the Chair may request that members attend in person, but the meetings would be offered as hybrid meetings at a time that was suitable to the majority of members.

The Democratic Services Committee agreed to extend an invitation to all interested Council Members to participate in the Task and Finish Groups. Arrangements will be made to capture feedback from all members not only those who are part of the Task & Finish Groups.

## 7. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

**Cllr. S. Rahaman  
CHAIRPERSON**