

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

10 November 2016

Chairperson: Councillor Mrs.L.H.James

Vice Chairperson: Councillor Ms.C.Morgans

Councillors: M.Harvey, E.E.Jones, R.G.Jones, J.D.Morgan,
A.L.Thomas and A.N.Woolcock

Officers In Attendance Mrs.K.Jones, R.George and N.Evans

1. **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

The following Member made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Cllr. L H James – the report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services – the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Draft Annual Report 2017/2018 as her daughter is a member of the panel

2. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING ON 1 JULY 2016**

Members considered the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 July 2016.

It was noted that there was an error in the minutes in relation to the Membership of the Task and Finish Group and it was agreed that this would be amended accordingly.

Officers advised that since the previous meeting officers had looked at the facilities within the Port Talbot Civic Centre for Elected Members and a layout plan for the Port Talbot Members Room has now been developed.

It was agreed that the layout plan should be circulated to the Committee and placed in the Democratic Services Office so that Members of the Committee could provide feedback as appropriate.

In addition, the Committee supported the Head of Democratic Services in continuing with the planned upgrade to Members facilities with Members keen to see progression particularly in relation to better audio/visual equipment within the Neath Civic Centre committee rooms and improved meeting room furniture within the Port Talbot Civic Centre committee rooms.

3. **SUBMISSION OF APOLOGIES FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Members considered a draft policy for the recording of apologies for Council Meetings.

Officers stated that there had been some confusion initially about the wording of the draft policy as it appeared to construe that apologies would be included within the official meeting minutes. However, it was confirmed that this was not the case and that apologies would simply be recorded as part of each Members online attendance record.

Members were also advised of the requirement to inform officers of any apologies in advance of any relevant meetings to ensure that the membership of the committee remains quorate.

Officers explained that the policy was presented as part of a consultation process and emphasised that it would be necessary to further consult political groups before being presented to Council for formal adoption. It was not envisaged that the policy would be implemented until after the May 2017 Local Government Elections.

Members asked how and when apologies should be submitted. It was agreed that apologies can be submitted by email, telephone or in person but needed to be actioned before or during the meeting itself. Members also agreed that the apologies should be from the individual themselves unless it was exceptional circumstances.

RESOLVED: that the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services should write on behalf of the Committee to the respective Group Leaders about the policy. If there are no issues identified then the policy can be taken to Council but if any issues are identified then a further report will be brought back to this Committee.

4. **MEMBERS' INDUCTION PROGRAMME 2017**

Members considered a report on the proposed arrangements for the induction of the new Council in May 2017.

Officers stated that the Chief Executive had suggested that the induction should not take place immediately following the election and the new Council should be provided with some space and time to allow the political groups to organise themselves. It was noted that the proposed date of 29 May, 2017 would be a Bank Holiday and the start of half term week.

Members queried the scope of the tour arrangements contained within Appendix One and advised that further thought be given to providing tours of both Civic Centres as well as The Quays Council offices, officers agreed to consider these proposals. It was suggested that staff within Democratic Services would not necessarily need to undertake the tours but it was something that could potentially be undertaken as part of the mentoring scheme if agreed by the respective political groups.

Members also suggested describing training sessions as either '**mandatory**' for training which is obligatory or '**essential**' for training which is considered important but not obligatory.

In relation to induction materials Members requested that such documentation should be placed clearly on the 'Members Hub' section of the intranet so that if any Member is inducted outside of the main induction period then the learning materials would still remain available for training purposes.

Resolved:

1. That officers look at the start date of the induction programme
2. That officers consider other Civic buildings to be included in any tour arrangements
3. That where possible the terms 'Essential' and 'Mandatory' are used to describe the different categories of training.

4. Induction materials are trialled with newly elected Member(s) as they are developed and when appropriate.

5. **INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES (IRPW)**
DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018

Members considered the draft Annual Report for 2017/2018 from the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) which was published in October.

Officers highlighted to Members that the panel had chosen to make same changes to certain determinations including a very modest increase to the basic salary for elected members.

The 0.75% increase is the first for three years and follows the slight easing of restraint in the pay of public sector employees. In addition the panel has decided to introduce arrangements to recognise the implications of long term sickness of senior salary holders.

Within their report the panel also outlined how they have made changes to provide more flexibility for authorities without undermining the principle of prescribing payments which still has continuing support.

To accompany the publication of the draft annual report 2017/18, the panel have also conducted a series of regional consultation meetings. In relation to the South West Wales meeting Members were informed that the Vice-Chair of the Committee attended along with the Electoral and Democratic Services Manager to maintain full engagement with panel members.

In relation to the panel's determinations on long term sickness absence Members queried how any sickness absence would be publicised. It was explained by the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services that any long term absence must be agreed by Council so there would be a record of any such dispensation. In addition, it was highlighted that the relevant group leader would need to make arrangements to cover any local case work for the relevant Member.