

# DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

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

**Members Present:**

**7 November, 2018**

**Chairperson:** Councillor J.D.Morgan

**Vice Chairperson:** Councillor M.Harvey

**Councillors:** S. ap Dafydd, S.K.Hunt, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, S.Purse, S.Renkes, A.J.Richards, A.J.Taylor and A.N.Woolcock

**Officers In Attendance** K.Jones, C.Griffiths, C.Furlow, J.Davies and A.Manchipp

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## 1. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Members noted that the Workshop in relation to the Disability Audit had been arranged.

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 September 2018, be noted.

## 2. **MEMBERS' APOLOGIES AT MEETINGS**

Committee received the Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer in relation to the submission of apologies at meetings by elected Members.

Following in depth discussion it was:

**RESOLVED:** that Option 2, as contained in the circulated report, be commended to Council as this Authority's Policy for Submission of Apologies at Meetings, subject to 'Apologies due to illness' being amended to 'Apologies due to ill health' and the comments being amended to read 'unable to attend due to ill health (including hospital appointments)' and that

apologies submitted after the start of the meeting only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.

### 3. **DRAFT REPORT OF THE IRPW**

Committee received the report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer on the Draft Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) on the proposed Members' Remuneration for 2019/20, which was issued for consultation. It was noted that the consultation period ended on 27 November 2018.

In addition Members received a verbal update following a meeting with the IRPW attended by the Chair and the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer. It was noted that the proposed increase in allowances set against a background of austerity and cuts in service delivery would have a negative impact on the public's perception. The reasons behind the proposals should therefore be clarified by the IRPW in its report. It should be noted that the proposed allowances were still based on a three day working week.

Going forward, it was noted that the IRPW would look for a different model. The Committee agreed to look at the support provided to Co-opted Members via the scheme.

In relation to the proposal to remove Council discretion to choose to pay different bands or levels, Members were pleased to note that there was still the opportunity for individual Members to waive, either in part or as a whole, their allowance.

In relation to the proposal to increase the Deputy Civic Head's allowance by 7.78%, Committee agreed that the increase was in excess of the rate of inflation and significantly exceeded the other proposed increases.

Members asked whether the proposals of the IRPW could prevent the Authority from entering into a further Workforce Agreement, should this arise, and were advised that should a further Agreement be sought the proposals would not cause a problem.

In relation to promoting equality and diversity, Members felt that the basic amount of remuneration did not sufficiently recompense Members to allow them to give up full time employment or their career to become an elected Member of an Authority.

- RESOLVED:** 1. That the following proposals contained in the IRPW's Draft Report:-
- a. The proposed removal of the discretion given to Councils with regard to the level of remuneration be supported;
  - b. The proposed percentage increase for the Deputy Civic Head be not supported and a request be made to keep this increase in line with other proposed increases contained in the report;
  - c. That a review of the current scheme be requested, as this had been in place since 2009 and did not reflect the austerity measures which had faced local government over recent years;
  - d. That where appropriate the claims for Carers Allowances be promoted;
  - e. That the report clarify the reasons behind the proposed increase in allowances.
2. That the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer compose a response in line with Members views as outlined above and that this be approved by the Chairperson prior to submission to the IRPW.

4. **GUIDANCE NOTE FOR MEMBERS ON DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DECISION MAKING ISSUES**

Members received the Report of the Head of Legal Services which contained a Guidance Note for Members on Declarations of Interest.

Members were pleased with the report but asked that some of the wording be simplified and that the Section dealing with pre determination be further expanded to not only include Planning.

**RESOLVED:** That the Head of Legal Services be given delegated authority to make the amendments, as outlined above, in consultation with the Chairperson, and

thereafter the Document be circulated to all Members.

5. **AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION REGARDING SCRUTINY RULES AND DESIGNATION OF CHAIR**

In accordance with Minute Number 2 of the 1 February 2018, Committee received the Report of the Head of Legal Services on proposed changes to the Authority's Constitution in relation to amending the Rules of Procedure for Scrutiny meetings and the use of the term Chairman.

**RESOLVED:** That the report of the Head of Legal Services in relation to proposed changes to the Authority's Constitution, as contained in the circulated report, be commended to Council for approval.

6. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 18/19**

Members raised the issue of agenda planning and the possibility of arranging meetings taking in consideration the Authority's school holidays. This would be raised at the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That the Forward Work Programme for 2018/19, as appended to the circulated report, be noted, subject to the following being added to the meeting to be held on 7 March 2018:

- Disability Audit
- IT Ref Group
- Feedback from Scrutiny Chair and Vice Chair meeting on the scrutiny process in Neath Port Talbot.

**CHAIRPERSON**