

# **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

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

**Members Present:**

**14 November 2019**

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

**Councillors:** S.apDafydd, M.Harvey, J.Hurley, S.Miller,  
S.Purse, S.Renkes, A.J.Taylor and S.K.Hunt

**Officers in Attendance:** K.Jones, C.Furlow-Harris, S.Curran and  
A.Manchip

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

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 September 2019 were approved as an accurate record.

Members noted the following updates:

- Following a recent meeting the IRPW confirmed that it agreed with the views of members, in that the HMRC should treat the carers' allowance as a reimbursement and that it should not be taxed. The IRPW suggested that local authorities write to the HMRC as a collective. Authorities had agreed to provide a template for this letter, however, to date, this had not been received. The Head of Democratic Services would therefore write a response and circulate to other local authorities for information.
- In relation to the Committee's Annual Report, it was agreed that this be presented to Council for information.

## **2. UPDATE ON THE MEMBERS IT REFERENCE GROUP**

Committee received the progress report of the IT Reference Group. Members discussed the use of the Case Work application, on which members had previously received a presentation. It was agreed that information on the application be forwarded to the political groups and that they be requested to assess the level of interest in take up prior to further consideration.

In relation to the trialling of Office 365, Members asked when this was going to be rolled out. The Head of Democratic Services advised that a roll out plan would be requested from the ICT Manager.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

3. **DRAFT SURVEY FOR ELECTED MEMBERS 2019/20**

Committee noted, attached to the circulated report, the draft members' survey which it was anticipated would be completed early in 2020. Members noted that the survey would be completed on a 1:1 basis with officers from Democratic Services.

In addition to the questions contained in the draft document, members asked that questions in relation to the following be added:

- Problems experienced by members around disabilities:
- Meeting times:
- Any equality issues:
- More specific questions around members use of IT:
- How useful members felt the survey was.

Following the above discussions it was:

- RESOLVED:**
1. That following the addition of questions in relation to the above, a pilot of the survey be undertaken;
  2. That the Chair of the Disability Working Group write to all members encouraging those with disability issues to discuss such disabilities, if they were affecting members participation in Council business, with the Head of Democratic Services in order that assistance could be provided for them to carry out their duties as councillors.

4. **UPDATE ON THE DISABILITY AUDIT GROUP**

Members received an update on the work of the Disability Audit Group. It was noted that the Group would next meet with officers from estates and the accommodation working group to discuss the

proposals put forward by Proudlock Associates in relation to the Civic building at both Neath and Port Talbot. Thereafter a final report would be submitted to this committee for consideration.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

5. **UPDATE FOLLOWING MEETING WITH THE IRPW ON 22 OCTOBER 2019 ON THE IRPW'S DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT, FEBRUARY 2020**

Members received, as an appendix to the circulated report, a copy of the draft report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) which set out its proposals for the remuneration of Members of principal Councils in Wales for 2020/21.

Members' attention was drawn to the proposal to increase members' basic allowance by £350 per annum with effect from the new financial year. Committee noted that their rate of remuneration had fallen behind the benchmark. Committee agreed that any increase should be from the new Civic Year.

In relation to providing sufficient support to members, the range of support already in place was set out in the report and noted.

Committee noted that the IRPW had requested that the carers' allowance was promoted further to encourage take up.

Clarification was sought as to what the IRPW was suggesting regarding telephones. Members queried whether there was a possibility of transferring the sim cards from the i pads to mobile telephones. It was agreed that this would be discussed further and fed into the IT Reference Group for consideration.

**RESOLVED:** That the Head of Democratic Services respond to the IRPW's consultation with a view that the increase in basic allowance appeared acceptable but should apply from the new Civic Year and not the financial. That the IRPW draft report be circulated to all Members with a reminder that members can respond on an individual basis if they so wished.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Forward Work Programme be noted and that the Disability Audit Group and the Members' Survey be added to the planner for the 3 March meeting.