

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

22nd January 2024

URGENT REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED – ALL

APSE Wales Chair – Housing, Homelessness and Community Support

Purpose of Report

To authorise the Leader of Council to act as Chair of the APSE Housing, Homeless and Community Support group and that an officer from the Social Services Directorate be identified as the Lead Officer associated with this advisory group.

Background

APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) is a not for profit unincorporated association working with over 300 councils throughout the UK, with the aim of promoting excellence in public services.

APSE operates on a UK wide basis with self-governing branches, of which Wales is one. Each area determines its own work programme and in Wales that previously included 4 advisory groups. The groups are free and open to all officers and elected members from APSE's Welsh authority membership.

The four advisory groups included the Renewables & Climate Change group. The current Leader of Council, Cllr Steve Hunt, was appointed chair of the group in 2023.

APSE has undertaken a review of its arrangements and found that its groups were not run with much regularity, attracted relatively low numbers and were in competition with the UK-wide advisory groups, which are now readily accessible by member councils within APSE Wales. Furthermore, emerging legislative and policy differentials within Wales were not given sufficient focus because of the current delineation of the groups.

In light of the above review, APSE are now consolidating its four groups to three groups on an interim basis with a view to this becoming permanent. This decision will be taken at the APSE Wales' 2024 AGM. Under the change to its groups, Renewables and Climate Change will be consolidated into Housing, Homelessness and Community Support, which will cover the areas of social housing provision and building maintenance, as well as provide additional policy cover of homelessness, asylum seeker support, cost-of-living and community focused services. Therefore the existing Renewables & Climate Change group will cease to exist.

The chair of the new Housing, Homelessness and Community Support group has been offered to the current Leader of Council, Cllr Steve Hunt whose role will be to chair the meeting and agree the agenda in advance. It is understood that the honorarium of £500 per annum associated with the previous chair position will continue for this new position.

Approval therefore is sought for the Leader of Council to be authorised to act as Chair of the APSE Wales Housing, Homeless and Community Support group on an interim basis initially and on a permanent basis should APSE Wales determine to make the changes to its arrangements permanent.

The advisory group would usually be supported by a lead officer from the same authority of the Chair. The Social Services Directorate will be approached to provide a lead officer for this group with the benefits of participation anticipated to justify the officer time that would be committed. These appointments will reinforce the Council's commitment to responding to pressing areas of housing, homelessness and cost of living and illicit learning that should benefit or work programmes in an area identified as a priority within the Council's Corporate Plan.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report as it relates to an outside body appointment

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report as the honorarium mentioned above is met by APSE.

Consultation

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Integrated Impact Assessment

As this report relates to governance arrangements, there would be no requirement for an integrated impact assessment.

Workforce Impact

As indicated above, the advisory group though would usually have a lead officer from the same authority of the Chair and the Social Services Directorate will be approached to provide a lead officer for the group. The benefits that Council could gain from this group will in turn hopefully benefit work programmes that this Council will embark on.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council authorise the Leader of Council to act as Chair of the APSE Wales Housing, Homeless and Community Support group on an interim basis initially and on a permanent basis should APSE Wales determine to make the Housing, Homeless and Community Support group permanent, and that an officer be identified by the Director of Social Services as the Lead Officer associated with this advisory group.

Reason for Proposed Decision

To provide authorisation for the Leader of Council to act as a representative to an outside body and to authorise officer participation in the same work.

Implementation of Decision

Implementation is proposed after the three-day call in period.

Appendices

None

Background Documents

None

Officer Contacts

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