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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin LL15 1YN on Friday, 23 March 2018 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Rachel Flynn, Hugh Irving, Alan James (Chair), Huw Jones, Gwyneth Kensler, Christine Marston, Andrew Thomas and Graham Timms

ALSO PRESENT

Head of Legal, HR & Democratic Services (GW)
Democratic Services Manager (SP)
Scrutiny Coordinator (RhE)
Committee Administrator (RhJ)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Joe Welch and Councillor Joan Butterfield.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declarations of interests were raised.

3 URGENT ITEMS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent items.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Democratic Services Committee held on the 20 October 2017 were submitted.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee's meeting held on the 20 October 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

5 INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT 2018 / 19

The Democratic Services Manager (DSM) introduced the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual report 2018 / 19 (previously circulated).

The DSM stated that the panel had decided to provide an increment of £200 a year to the basic salary for each councillor. It was also stated that there would be no change to the senior or civic salary levels from last year. However, the Panel has removed the two-tier payment options for Cabinet members and committee chairs.

Members discussed the role of the Panel and its aim of contributing to enhance diversity in local government. Setting appropriate salaries able to attract a more diverse and representative range of people to stand for election to local government being one of the Panel's key actions.

With many county councillors also serving on their local city, town or community councils (CTCC) a number of members voiced concerns that the Panel's decisions relating to payments by CTCCs could put pressure on their finances.

RESOLVED – That the Democratic Services Committee note the content of the report.

6 MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Democratic Services Manager (DSM) presented a verbal report on member training, development, provision and participation.

The DSM stated that the purpose of the report was to have the opinion of the members of the Democratic Services Committee on the training they had received and what future training should be offered to members.

The DSM stated that training could be carried out either internally by officers or with external facilitation.

The following points were raised in the discussion following the DSM's introduction:

- Members requested that individual records of the training undertaken by members be kept.
- Data protection was raised and whether any training would be available for members. The head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services reported that the Legal Services Manager and the Business Information Team Manager were developing training for members in regards to the GDPR.
- A query was raised about whether community councils could have training from Denbighshire County Council. The Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services advised that training for community councillors on the code of conduct was available

RESOLVED - That the Democratic Service Committee recommends that a record of training for individual members be maintain.

7 FUTURE SCRUTINY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

The Scrutiny Coordinator (SC) presented the report to facilitate a discussion on potential effective, sustainable future scrutiny arrangements for the Public Services Board (PSB) whilst ensuring compliance with statutory requirements (previously circulated).

The SC informed the committee that there were three options proposed on how to move forward with scrutiny of the Public Services Board.

- Continue with current arrangements of utilising the separate local authority Scrutiny Committees to oversee each Council's aspects of work for the Joint PSB.
- Develop a dedicated joint Conwy and Denbighshire PSB Scrutiny committee.
- Hold informal joint meeting of both Scrutiny committees.

The issues raised by Members included:

- The Council's Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group and the PSB had considered the potential Scrutiny arrangements and both favoured the establishment of a formal joint Scrutiny committee for the PSB.
- The likely effect the Welsh Government's green paper on local government might have. In respect of any local authority reorganisation Conwy and Denbighshire would likely be merged together covering the same area as the existing PSB.
- The Committee agreed that establishing a formal joint Scrutiny committee with Conwy was the best option for scrutinising the cross-county strategic PSB.

RESOLVED – That the Committee supports the establishment of a formal joint Scrutiny between Denbighshire and Conwy to scrutinise the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board.

8 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEES 2017/18

The Scrutiny Coordinator (SC) presented a report to seek the members' views on the proposed arrangements for the production of the Draft Annual Report of the Council's Scrutiny Committees for 2017/18.

The SC told asked whether there were any suggestions or any additional information it would like to see included in the Annual Report to be presented to Annual Council in May 2018.

The SC informed members that a questionnaire had been circulated to all councillors, co-opted members and officers who regularly engaged with Scrutiny. A total of 60 questionnaires had been issued with 15 returned. In response to the questionnaire members raised the following issues.

A suggestion was made about how the low response rate from councillors could have been partly due to difficulties some members had experienced in completing the questionnaire online or because surveys circulated by email could be quickly lost amongst the large volume of email messages received by members.

RESOLVED – That the Committee supports the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Council's Scrutiny function and the participation of members and relevant officers in the evaluation exercise.

9 ELECTORAL REVIEW OF DENBIGHSHIRE

The Democratic Services Manager (DSM) introduced the report into the Electoral Review of Denbighshire.

The DSM summarised the criteria being used by the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales' review of Denbighshire. The review aimed to improve electoral parity throughout the county by harmonising the number of constituents represented by each councillor though the Commission felt that the overall size of the Council (i.e. the number of councillors) was appropriate subject to any minor alterations to improve electoral parity at ward level.

The Commission had provided a colour-coded map of the county based on the existing variance on electoral representation with wards coloured orange or hatched orange the wards with the greatest variance (either too few or too many electors per councillor) and therefore of most concern.

Members were advised that transfers of areas between Denbighshire and any of its neighbouring authorities would not be permitted under the rules of the review so that any changes to the ward boundaries would be contained within the county boundary.

In response to a question the DSM confirmed that the Welsh Government's current proposals on reorganising local government could affect the current electoral boundary review.

RESOLVED - That the Committee endorses the recommendations and summary of the Member Working Group.

10 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the Forward Work Programme and the following items were agreed:

- Local government reorganisation and mergers be a standing item
- Scrutiny arrangements for the Public Services Board (for the next meeting)
- The draft annual report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (for the next meeting)
- When available, a report on the Scrutiny arrangements for the North Wales Growth Board

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above amendments, the forward work programme be approved.

The meeting concluded at 11:38.