

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin LL15 1YN on Friday, 19 October 2018 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Alan James (Chair), Huw Jones, Gwyneth Kensler, Christine Marston and Joe Welch

ALSO PRESENT

Observer – Councillor Glen Swingler

Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services – Monitoring Officer (GW)
Democratic Services Manager (SP)
Scrutiny Coordinator (RhE)
Committee Administrator (RhTJ)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Graham Timms.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All members present queried whether an interest would have to be declared in respect the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' Draft Annual Report which determined councillors' salaries.

The Monitoring officer responded stating that all Councillors would have to declare a personal interest but not a prejudicial interest.

All members present declared a personal interest in the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' Draft Annual Report.

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 23rd March were submitted.

Page 8 – Item 9: An update on the Electoral Review of Denbighshire was requested. The Head of Legal HR and Democratic Services (HLHDS) stated that the proposals have been published. A meeting would be arranged with the members' working group to discuss the proposals prior to coming to Council in January.

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' DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT

The Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (HLHDS) presented a report on the consultation on the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' Draft Annual Report for 2019 – 2020 (previously circulated).

The committee was informed that the Democratic Services Manager (DSM) and the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee were meeting Independent Remuneration Panel representatives in November and would present any concerns or comments the committee had.

The HLHDS outlined that the draft annual report proposed an increase of the basic salary by 1.97% (£268) to £13,868 which would be available for all councillors. In response to queries about accepting the payment, the HLHDS confirmed that if the draft report was confirmed the increase would be implemented. However if any Councillors wished to decline the increase a written notification would have to be submitted to Democratic Services.

The increase in salary for Cabinet members was proposed to be £532, and was due to Cabinet members not having had an increase for the past six years.

Concerns were raised in respect of smaller community councils and whether the annual payments would account for most of their precept. The committee noted that town and community councillors could still refuse to take their salaries after giving written notice to their clerks.

RESOLVED – *That the committee notes the contents of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' draft annual report.*

6 TIMING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Democratic Services Manager (DSM) presented a report on the Timing of Council Meetings (previously circulated).

The DSM informed the committee that the report outlined the results of the questionnaire which was circulated in August and September. The results supported the current practice of holding most meeting during the morning and a preference for holding meetings in Ruthin.

The members were made aware that the questionnaire had responses from 35 members which represented 74% of the Council's membership.

Following the introduction members discussed the results of the Timings of Council Meetings survey –

- Concerns with evening meetings and the potential cost implications which could be incurred, from needing to have buildings open later than the office hours.
- Membership of other bodies i.e. school governing bodies, local town and community councils. These meetings were held during the evening and could cause clashes.
- Members also commented that many employers now offered flexible working patterns which facilitated attendance at day-time meetings whilst evening working and family responsibilities made evening meetings unsuitable for many parents with young children.

Following the discussion the committee noted the content of the survey. The committee endorsed the results of the survey and the continuation of the existing arrangements for the time and location of meetings.

RESOLVED – *That the committee recommend to Council that the current arrangements for the timing and location of meetings be retained, in line with the results of the 2018 survey of elected members.*

7 JOINT SCRUTINY OF THE PSB

The Democratic Services Manager (DSM) presented a report on the Joint Scrutiny Committee for the Public Services Board (previously circulated).

The members were informed that the purpose of the report was to update the committee on what progress had been made towards establishing a formal joint Scrutiny committee for Denbighshire and Conwy Councils to scrutinise the Public Services Board (PSB).

Members were advised of some changes to the draft proposal, there was a change to the numbers of elected members from each Council from 6 to 8. The term for the chairs of the committee would be two years and the elected chair's authority would provide the Secretariat. The members were informed that Conwy had agreed to the draft terms of reference.

Following the introduction the following points were discussed –

- The members queried whether it was known which Council would be chairing the first meeting. In response it was clarified that it depended on who was elected as chair at the meeting. The members were made aware that Denbighshire would create the agenda pack for the first meeting.
- Each Council's membership of the Scrutiny Committee would be politically balanced.

RESOLVED *That:*

- the Committee recommends to Council the establishing of a formal joint Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board;*

- ii. *the Committee endorses for Council approval the draft terms of reference and rules of procedure for the joint Scrutiny committee; and*
- iii. *the Committee recommends, that no remuneration should be made available to the chair of the joint Scrutiny committee.*

8 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Manager (DSM) introduced the Forward Work Programme.

The members were informed that the work programme was currently unpopulated but would be populated prior to the next meeting.

RESOLVED – *That, officers liaise with the chair to populate the forward work programme for the committee's next meeting.*

The meeting concluded at 11:26