

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE 29/11/16

Present: Thomas G. Ellis (Chair)

Councillors: Annwen Daniels, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Charles Wyn Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Michael Sol Owen, Jean Forsyth and Anne Lloyd Jones

OFFICERS: Arwel Ellis Jones (Corporate Support Senior Manager), Vera Jones (Members Support Manager – Democratic Services), Siôn Owen (Members' Support Officer)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Annwen Hughes, Lesley Day, Jason Humphreys and Dylan Fernley

1. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

2. **URGENT ITEMS**

None to note.

3. **MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 20 September 2016, as a true record.

4. **INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES CONSULTATION**

Submitted - observations from the meeting attended by the Chair of this Committee and the Head of Democratic Services with members of the Independent Panel. It was noted that a slight increase of 0.75% in the basic salary for elected members was intended for next year following the Council elections. This meant an increase of £100 per annum. The committee was asked for its comments.

It was reported that the purpose of the reimbursement of care costs was to enable people from a range of backgrounds and circumstances to be elected members by enabling them to attend meetings. It was noted that no claim for reimbursement of care costs had been made recently as negative publicity had derived from the publication of care cost repayment claims.

In terms of recording the reason why a member had been absent from a meeting, it was noted that the intention was in order to inform others that a member had been unable to attend as they were elsewhere on Council business.

Observations arising from the discussion:-

- What was the response of other councils? In response, the Senior Democracy and Delivery Manager noted that there was a difference of opinion in general, with a few councils refusing the proposal.
- That the proposal should be accepted in principle, in order to encourage candidates from different backgrounds to stand in an election.
- That it was important to refrain from sharing details regarding care cost repayment claims as part of freedom of information requests. In response, the Senior Corporate Support Manager noted that details regarding the repayments was not information covered under the 'right to information'. As checks that the

money had been distributed appropriately would be carried out along normal channels.

- A record should be kept of when members were absent due to other Council business, and that organisations should be aware of meetings arranged by other organisations and the demand of that on members' time.
- That the Panel should not receive an invitation to speak with the Full Council. In response, the Senior Corporate Support Manager noted that the Panel wished to hear different voices, and that this did not necessarily have to happen in the Full Council.

RESOLVED:

- a) to support the proposal to increase the basic allowance from £13,300 to £13,400**
b) in order to encourage more eligible members to claim the care costs support, give support that the total reclaimed by the authority during the year should be published, but without attributing the payments to any member, and to ask the Panel also to consider how to ensure that freedom of information requests in the future do not mean that authorities have to release information about care cost repayment claims per individual.
c) support the proposed new arrangements for the sickness absence of a recipient at a higher salary.
ch) to support the recommendation to note the reason for the absence where it is as a result of a member representing the Council at another meeting, whilst noting that individual members have to provide the information themselves.
d) to invite the Panel to meet with the Democratic Services Committee in the future and not with the Full Council.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2017

Submitted - a progress report on the preparations for the 2017 election. It was reported that the proposed arrangements had been submitted at the previous meeting of the Committee. It was noted that the meetings to raise awareness amongst prospective candidates had been arranged.

It was added that the Committee needed to consider three things specifically when discussing the Welcome Days:

- A - Increasing the resource for on-line learning - e-learning
- B - Looking at making training mandatory
- C - Publish members' attendance at training

Observations arising from the discussion:-

- Was there a suggestion that Members do not attend the meetings in their own areas? The Senior Corporate Support Manager replied that the Sub-group had made arrangements for Members who did not intend to stand in the Election to speak at the meetings, and for them to do so outside their own areas. He noted that the meetings were public meetings, with the intention of sharing information and giving an opportunity to ask questions only. It was intended to share information with the Council and Area Forums also.
- That the clerk of one Community/Town Council had complained about the promotional poster as he felt that it was derogatory as it portrayed a childish image of Councillors. In response, the Senior Democracy and Delivery Manager noted that the intention of the poster was to be simple and non-threatening, and that there had been no intention to appear derogatory.
- Concern was raised as to the short time between the election and the induction sessions which could prove tricky for newly elected Members in 2017 to arrange time off work to attend the induction sessions. In response, the Senior Corporate

Support Manager noted that the induction dates for prospective candidates would be spread out in order to pre warn and prepare them should they be elected.

- That e-learning was very relevant and important in order to enable members to receive training at a time that was convenient to them.
- That members' attendance at training should be noted, and that efforts should be made to include information about e-learning also.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

6. MODERN.GOV DEVELOPMENT

Submitted - an update on the Council's use of the Modern.gov software since the purchase and installation of the software in 2015. It was noted that the programme allowed the Democracy Service to publish more information, with 40 elected members using the app linked to the software.

Observations arising from the discussion:-

- It would be beneficial to make better connections with Outlook to facilitate the attendance of members and officers when arranging meetings.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

7. MEMBERS CHARTER

The report was submitted, explaining that the resources were now available from the WLGA to assess councils for the charter (Members Charter). One of the main matters requiring attention in order to gain the Charter was to ensure that job descriptions for members were correct and fit for purpose. Therefore, a request was made for the Committee's permission to consult with those undertaking the jobs in question and convene a sub-group to provide their views and assist the Council to be awarded the Charter.

Observations arising from the discussion:-

- Considering that a job description would be in place, would there be an element of performance evaluation as a result? In response, the Senior Corporate Support Manager noted that elected members were not council staff, and that there was no element of evaluation associated with adopting job descriptions. However, personal development interviews were available to any member who wished to take advantage of them.
- To add "collaborate and discuss with the portfolio holder" into the Champion's job description.
- To add the category 'represent the Council on outside bodies' to the general job description. It was noted that a review was in the pipeline in the field to measure the expectations on members who were members of outside bodies.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 11.50 am

CHAIRMAN