

CONSTITUTION AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
9 NOVEMBER 2022

Minutes of the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a remote attendance meeting on Wednesday, 9 November 2022

PRESENT: Councillor Rob Davies (Chairman)

Councillors: Gillian Brockley, David Coggins Cogan, Steve Copple, Ian Hodge, Alasdair Ibbotson, Paul Johnson, Gina Maddison, Roz Mansell, Ted Palmer, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Linda Thew, Arnold Woolley and Antony Wren

APOLOGY: Councillor Jean Davies

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Officer (Governance), Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A personal interest was recorded for all Committee Members present on agenda item 4 - IRPW Draft Annual Report 2023/24.

15. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2022 were approved, as moved and seconded by Councillors Ian Hodge and Gillian Brockley.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

16. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES (IRPW) DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The Democratic Services Manager presented the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) draft Annual Report with proposed rates of payment to elected and co-opted members of Welsh Local Authorities for 2023/24. Views were sought from the Committee prior to the Council submitting a response by 1 December 2022. The IRPW was required to take into account any representations on the draft before issuing the final report in February 2023.

Reference was made to the revised format of the report and the approach taken by the IRPW to align the basic salary of councillors and the average salaries of their constituents through use of the 2020 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) published by the Office of National Statistics. Proposed increases of between 3.15% and 4.76% were well behind the current level of inflation.

In providing background, the Chief Officer (Governance) outlined the considerations of the Committee on the 2022/23 IRPW report, including representations that increments should be applied gradually over the term of the

Council to avoid the need for a single large increase, whilst also taking into account inflationary levels at the time. He suggested that the Committee may wish to consider making representations for the IRPW to use other comparative sources, in addition to ASHE (which related to 2021 figures) to avoid reliance on one source of data and ensure that councillors' salaries did not fall behind those they represented. This would also help to encourage diversity in local government.

Councillor Ted Palmer highlighted the importance of the IRPW as an independent body continuing to make the final decision and the individual choice of Members in choosing whether or not to accept any pay increases.

The Chief Officer clarified that although this was an independent process, elected Members were able to decide whether to accept their increase or if they wished could opt out by informing the Democratic Services Manager.

In response to a question from Councillor Steve Copple, it was explained that the IRPW reports had considered but rejected basing allowances on the National Living Wage and the Real Living Wage because they did not reflect average earnings. The Democratic Services Manager agreed to circulate a link to the explanatory paper on the IRPW website which explained the rationale for retaining the link with ASHE.

Councillor Paul Johnson spoke about the need for IRPW to be consistent in reaching its determinations year on year.

The Committee indicated support for the comments made by the Chief Officer. On that basis, the recommendations were moved and seconded by Councillors Michelle Perfect and Ted Palmer.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the Determinations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in the draft Annual Report for 2023/24; and
- (b) That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to make a response on behalf of the Council, reflecting the decision made at the meeting, to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales as follows:

To request that the IRPW expand on comparative sources to ensure that pay rates remain up-to-date and avoid the need for a significant uplift, particularly before an election.

17. TIMINGS OF MEETINGS AND MEETING FORMAT SURVEY

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report to seek the views of the Committee on the proposed survey on timings of meetings and meeting format. The survey would provide an opportunity for all Members to share their views on when and how meetings would be held, taking into account the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 on multi-location meetings.

The Chief Officer (Governance) provided background on the legislative changes which supported wider accessibility to formal meetings. He asked whether the Committee was satisfied that the survey would enable each individual to fully express their views.

Councillor Alasdair Ibbotson’s proposal that the Committee move to the recommendation was seconded by Councillor Gillian Brockley. The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Michelle Perfect and Ted Palmer.

It was clarified that the survey would be issued electronically and that Members would be provided with a paper copy on request. Councillor Ted Palmer and Gillian Brockley both requested paper copies.

The outcome of the survey would be reported to the Committee in January 2023 and any changes incorporated into the Schedule of Meetings for 2023/24.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee agrees to the proposed approach to conducting the survey and approves the survey form to be used.

18. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

None.

(The meeting started at 2pm and ended at 2.35pm)

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Chairman