

CONSTITUTION AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
27 NOVEMBER 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Room, County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 27 November 2019.

PRESENT: **Councillor Ted Palmer (Chair)**

Chris Bithell, Clive Carver, Jean Davies, Rob Davies, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Joe Johnson, Paul Johnson, Mike Peers, Vicky Perfect, Neville Phillips, Ian Smith, David Wisinger and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGIES: Councillor Michelle Perfect

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillors Ralph Small (for Bob Connah) and Patrick Heesom (for David Williams)

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer

OPENING COMMENTS

Before the start of the meeting, the Democratic Services Manager read out a statement on the restrictions over discussions at meetings during the current pre-Election period.

15. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor David Wisinger nominated Councillor Jean Davies for the position of Vice Chair and this was duly seconded by Councillor Clive Carver.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Jean Davies be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None were received.

17. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2019 were submitted.

Approval was moved by Councillor Chris Bithell and seconded by Councillor David Healey.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

18. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES (IRPW) ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020/21

The Democratic Services Manager introduced a report on the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Annual Report for 2020/21, which determines payment to elected and co-opted members for the next year. He provided background information and said the IRPW had sent the draft Annual Report to County Councils on 15 October, requesting comments to be made by 10 December 2019. The IRPW was required to take into account the representations which it received on the draft before issuing its final version of the report in February 2020.

In presenting the report, the Democratic Services Manager advised that for 2020/21 the IRPW had made 51 Determinations, 18 of which were directly relevant to Flintshire County Council. He advised that the IPPW had proposed that the basic salary in 2020/21 for elected members of principal councils be increased by £350 to £14,218 with effect from 1 April 2020. To put this in context the IRPW, had carried out analysis of basic members' salaries and made the point that 'backbench council members' salaries had fallen significantly behind inflation. He reported that no changes, other than the increase in basic salary, were proposed for senior or civic salaries. Political group leaders and deputies had been consulted on the report at a meeting held on 22 November 2019.

Councillor Mike Peers provided feedback on the meeting of Group Leaders on 22 November and said the recommendation arising from consideration of the IRPW report was that it be noted. He therefore proposed that the Committee noted the determinations made by the IRPW in their draft Annual Report for 2020/21.

Councillor Peers drew attention to page 17, section 6, of the agenda, which referred to the provision in the framework to reimburse members for the costs of care. The Democratic Services Manager explained that Councils were not required to disclose the recipients of the cost of care and had the facility to aggregate the costs. He said that the Authority had adopted this provision as good practice for a number of years, however, the IRPW had placed renewed emphasis on Councils adopting this element of the framework so that members were not financially disadvantaged.

The Democratic Services Manager explained that the IRPW proposed that the increases in salary would come into effect from 1 April 2020, however, it was suggested that the Committee consider whether it would be more practical for increases in all Member payments to take effect from the Authority's annual meeting rather than the start of the financial year. He said this would also address the issue of any change to Members' positions which took place following the Annual Meeting.

Councillor Chris Bithell spoke of the changing and increasing role and responsibilities of Elected Members and Cabinet Members and said it was only fair that Members were appropriately remunerated for their work. He referred to attendance at meetings and commented that whilst attendance at most meetings of the Council were recorded there was a significant number of additional meetings attended by Elected Members as part of their duties which were not,

citing meetings of outside organisations and bodies as examples. He emphasised the need to raise public awareness of the demands of the 'job' and the unsocial hours worked.

The Democratic Service Manager acknowledged the points made by Councillor Bithell. He advised that attendance at workshops and training events provided by the Council were now recorded on the Council's systems, however, the Council was not able to record attendance at the other additional meetings/events attended by Elected Members. He urged Members to take advantage of the facility to produce an Annual Report in which each Member could identify all their activities and duties.

Councillor Chris Bithell commented on the potential for job-sharing and asked if this could be developed by the Council. He also sought clarification around payments for Elected Members during sickness or family absence. The Democratic Services Manager advised that payments were made at local discretion.

Councillor Arnold Woolley reiterated the comments expressed by Councillor Bithell around the recording of attendance at meetings other than Council meetings and commented on the additional workload as a result of membership of external organisations and bodies.

Councillor Paul Johnson asked if the Annual Reports produced by individual Members could be included on the Authority's website as a link in the information provided on the 'Your Councillor' page.

Councillor Chris Bithell referred to page 30 of the report regarding payments to Civic Heads and Deputies. The Democratic Services Manager provided background information around the IRPW payment levels for Civic Heads and Deputies and responded to the further questions and comments raised. He also explained that there was a small budget available to cover the cost of transport and other small sundry expenses incurred by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Mike Peers and seconded by Councillor David Healey.

RESOLVED:

That the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales be informed:

- (a) That the Committee notes the determinations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in their draft Annual Report for 2020/21;
- (b) That the Committee supports Determination 41 (Reimbursement of Costs of Care) and confirms that the Council's policy is to anonymise claims as an aggregated figure, rather than individually;
- (c) That the Committee's view is that it would be more practical for any increases in all Member payments to take effect from an authority's annual

meeting at the start of the municipal year rather than the financial year;
and

- (d) That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to make a response on behalf of the Council to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, reflecting decisions at the meeting.

19. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report to consider and approve the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report for 2018/19. He provided background information and said that the Annual Report provided the Council with assurance that the Overview & Scrutiny function was fulfilling its constitutional role. The draft Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report for 2018/19 was appended to the report.

The proposal for approval of the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report was moved by Councillor Chris Bithell and seconded by Councillor Joe Johnson.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19, as appended to the report, be approved.

20. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press present.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 2.41 pm)

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Chair