

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

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| <b>REPORT TO:</b> | <b><u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE<br/>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE</u></b>           |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>   | <b><u>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE –<br/>16<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2015</u></b>       |
| <b>REPORT OF:</b> | <b><u>SENIOR BUSINESS SUPPORT OFFICER -<br/>DEMOCRATIC &amp; CORPORATE SUPPORT</u></b> |

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PRESENT: COUNCILLOR MRS. J. MORGAN, J.P.  
(VICE-CHAIR IN THE CHAIR)

Councillors M. Dally  
Mrs. A. Hobbs  
J. Morgan  
D. Owens

AND: Head of Financial Services  
Head of Policy and Performance (Designated Head of  
Democratic Services)

WITH: **Scrutiny Chair**  
Councillor M. Cross

| <b>ITEM</b> | <b>SUBJECT</b>   | <b>ACTION</b> |
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| 1.          | <b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b><br><br>Apologies for absence were received from:-<br><br>Councillors G. Collier, N. Daniels, R. Jones. C. Meredith, B. Scully. |               |

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| 2. | <p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>  |  |
| 3. | <p><b><u>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2015 were submitted for consideration, whereupon:-</p> <p><b><u>WLGA Charter for Member Development and Support</u></b></p> <p>For clarification, Members were advised that congratulations had been extended to all those involved in achieving Level 1 of the Welsh Local Government Association's Charter for Member Development and Support and an official announcement regarding the award had been made at the Council Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p> |  |
| 4. | <p><b><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Policy and Performance (designated Head of Democratic Services).</p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair, the Head of Policy and Performance (designated Head of Democratic Services) spoke briefly to the report and highlighted points contained therein. The officer referred to Paragraph 3 of the report which detailed the current level of support provided to Elected Members and this included:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Member Training and Development Programme</li> <li>➤ Personal Development Reviews</li> </ul>   |  |

- Mentoring Framework
- Support arrangements for Executive and Scrutiny
- Annual Reports for Members

In conclusion, the Head of Policy and Performance (designated Head of Democratic Services) advised that Council must provide the necessary resources (in its opinion) that were sufficient to allow the functions of the role set out in the Measure to be discharged, whilst the Head of Democratic Services was required to produce an annual report which included an assessment of current arrangements.

Therefore, the current assessment which had taken into consideration the Welsh Local Government Association external feedback received via the Charter Award submission was that Council could be assured that provision of support for Elected Members was of an adequate level.

Members were then given an opportunity to raise questions/comment on the report.

### **Member Development Strategy and Action Plan**

It was noted that significant progress had been made to date against the nine priority areas set out in the action plan. Six actions had been completed and work was progressing on the three outstanding areas.

### **Member Training**

A Member commented that an adequate level of training was provided but expressed concern regarding the overall level of attendance at Member training sessions.

A discussion ensued when the Head of Democratic Services advised that these observations would be reflected in the report that would be submitted to Council i.e. Members should take every opportunity to maximise the support offered.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

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|    | <p>RESOLVED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be approved, namely that the report be submitted to Council for approval on the basis that the Committee was satisfied that there was an adequate level of support provided for Elected Members.</p>   |  |
| 5. | <p><b><u>REVIEW AND PROPOSALS FOR THE ROLE OF MEMBER CHAMPIONS</u></b></p> <p>The report of the Head of Policy and Performance was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair, the Head of Policy and Performance spoke to the report which presented options for consideration following a review of the role of Member Champions. These proposals included rationalising the current number of champion roles and strengthening the Member champion arrangements.</p> <p>Councillor John Morgan joined the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>Members were then given the opportunity to raise questions/comment in relation to the report and Members raised the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Reference was made to the large number of Executive Portfolios (which were currently linked to the champion roles) and the high level of workload of Executive Members. It was, therefore, suggested that in order to alleviate the workload of Executive Members the role of Member Champions be open to other Members who could then work alongside Executive Members to champion and advocate the issue/topic.</li><li>➤ Member Champions needed to be knowledgeable in the subject matter that they would be advocating.</li><li>➤ Concern was expressed that there was no reporting mechanism in order that Members could report back information to Council. This included Members who were also appointed to outside bodies.</li></ul> |  |

- Reference was made to the options outlined in Paragraph 2.1 of the report and concern was expressed regarding the dilution of some roles for example Armed Forces and Digital Inclusion Champion Roles.

In reply to a question raised, the Head of Policy and Performance stated that the key principle of the role of Member Champions was to support an interest/topic and promote and advocate that particular topic area. Part of the review process would be scope each individual role in order to clarify its added value and ensure that there was no dilution of topic areas.

The Head of Policy and Performance said that reporting arrangements could be built on and suggested that an additional recommendation be forwarded to Council that a similar exercise be undertaken in relation to appointments to outside bodies.

RESOLVED to recommend that outside bodies be included within the scope of the recommendation to Council.

A discussion ensued when it was

FURTHER RESOLVED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option One be presented to Council for approval, namely:-

- (i) Reduce the current number of Member champion roles from 18 to 8 and better align the roles to both the National Well Being goals set out in the Well Being for Future Generations legislation and Transforming Blaenau Gwent Programme.
- (ii) Undertake further work to strengthen the supporting arrangements for Member Champion Roles and Appointments to Outside Bodies by establishing:
  - Clear scopes for each role which would enhance the existing role purpose and activities set out in the Constitution.

- Further clarity on how the champion role could support and inter relates to Member roles such as the Executive.
- Criteria for assessing future requests for Member champions.

Proposed Member champion roles under option one:-

| <b>Member Champion Role</b>          | <b>Broad Scope including links to current roles*</b>   |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Community Safety                     | Domestic abuse*, substance misuse, Anti-social behaviour   |
| Children                             | Scope to be confirmed  |
| Older Persons                        | Scope to be confirmed  |
| Equalities & Diversity               | 9 protected characteristics (includes sensory Impairment*) Fair trade*   |
| Vulnerable groups                    | Carers*, homelessness* Anti-poverty*   |
| Transforming Blaenau Gwent Programme | Promoting the principles of the programme, Procurement*, digital Inclusion*, cultural change*, Staff well-being* |
| Armed Forces                         | Engagement with armed Forces representatives and Attendance at events  |
| Biodiversity                         | Environmental issues   |

(Note: The Well Being goals for Wales were Prosperous; Resilient; Healthier; More equal; Cohesive communities; Vibrant culture and thriving; Welsh language and Globally responsible.

6.

**DRAFT REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES 2016/17**

Members considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer.

The Head of Financial Services explained that the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) published its report on Members remuneration on an annual basis. All Members of the Council had an opportunity to respond individually to the consultation on the draft 2016/17 report and the final report would be published by 29<sup>th</sup> February, 2016. It was the intention to submit this final report to the Democratic Services Committee prior to its consideration by Full Council.

The IRP were not proposing any increase to the basic salary level for Members i.e. the status quo of £13,300 would remain for 2016/17, however, the Panel had made a number of changes to the payment of senior salaries and these were outlined in Paragraph 3.4 of the report.

Members were then given the opportunity to raise questions/comment in relation to the report.

**Committee Chairs**

Members were advised that the Panel recognised that the specific responsibility and workload of some chairs was greater than others and considered that this should be reflected in the remuneration framework. The Panel was, therefore, introducing two levels of remuneration for Chairs of Committees:-

- Level 1 – to be paid a salary of £22,000
- Level 2 – to be paid a salary of £20,000

However, it would be a matter for individual councils to decide which of the chairs (if remunerated) were level 1 or level 2.

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**Leader of Other Political Groups**

It was noted that in order for a Leader of another Political Group to be eligible for payment, that Group would be required to comprise of 10% membership of the Council i.e.at least 5 Members.

RESOLVED to recommend that the report be accepted and the information contained within the draft report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales 2016/17 be noted.

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