

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – 5TH APRIL, 2018</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>BUSINESS SUPPORT OFFICER - DEMOCRATIC & CORPORATE SUPPORT</u>

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. McCARTHY (CHAIR)

Councillors J. Millard (Vice-Chair)

K. Hayden

L. Parsons

K. Rowson

B. Summers

S. Thomas

AND: Head of Policy and Performance
Head of Financial Services
Corporate Performance Manager
Head of Exchequer

ALSO: **Scrutiny Chairs & Vice-Chairs**
Councillors P. Edwards
H. Trollope

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	

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2.	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Councillors N. Daniels and J.C. Morgan</p>	
3.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	
4.	<p><u>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 20th February, 2018.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
5.	<p><u>REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES 2018/19</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Head of Exchequer and Head of Financial Services.</p> <p>The Head of Exchequer outlined the proposals contained in the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales 2018/19. The Officer advised that the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) proposed a £200 increase in salaries for all Elected Representatives and he further noted the levels of payments of basic and senior salaries for 2018/19.</p>	

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	<p>He referred to reimbursement costs of care and although there was no change in the level of costs which could be claimed the IRP wished to encourage greater use of this element. Therefore the Authority had two options for consideration relating to the publication of costs of care either detail the amounts reimbursed to individuals or publish only the total amount reimbursed by the Authority with no names attributed to the amounts.</p> <p>The Head of Exchequer further referred to the financial implications and advised that based on the current arrangements additional costs to be incurred were approximately £33,000, however it was anticipated that these costs could be absorbed in the 2018/19 budget.</p> <p>A Member welcomed the options available in terms of care costs reimbursement as they felt there was a great deal of public scrutiny on members expenses and this often leads to Members not claiming such costs.</p> <p>Another Member asked if all other Councils publish their expenses fully. The Member advised that expenses are a contentious issue and he felt that this deterred young people becoming councillors. It was important to ascertain if we are publishing information in line with other authorities.</p> <p>The Head of Financial Services advised that she was not aware of the level of information published by other authorities, however Councils are required to provide their published schedule of member remuneration to the IRPW and the IRPW also provide an example format. The Officer suggested that following the next publication of the information in the summer an analysis of the level of information published by other authorities would be undertaken.</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p>	<p>R. Hayden</p>

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	<p>Further discussions ensued around the costs of travel for Members with disabilities and it was agreed that the Head of Financial Services would seek clarification and report back to the Committee.</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p> <p>FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, to recommend that the report be accepted and option 2, for the publication of costs of care; namely, the total amount reimbursed by the Authority during the year but not attributed to any named Member be agreed and recommended to Council for approval.</p>	R. Hayden
6.	<p><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Policy and Performance.</p> <p>The Head of Policy and Performance spoke to the report which had been produced as part of her designated role of Head of Democratic Services. She advised that the report detailed the arrangements in place to support elected representatives and provided an overview of the support and services available to Members. She outlined the feedback received from attending political group meetings and noted the comments received as contained in the report.</p>	

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	<p>She further outlined the work taken forward following the meetings with political groups and invited questions/ observations from Members.</p> <p>A Member referred to the Mentoring Scheme and advised that he was unable to commit to the Scheme at this time until the agreed ICT approach for Members had been implemented.</p> <p>Members referred to the overspend of £2,317 reported for the Member Development Budget. Following further discussions Members felt that the current budget of £1,940 was not sufficient and it should be reviewed. The Officer could undertake a review of training costs based on evidence which could inform any review of the budget.</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p> <p>FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, to recommend that Option 2, with comments provided the Democratic Services Committee on the report of the HDS with the recommendation for Council to consider that the current Member Development Budget be reviewed.</p>	B. Elias
7.	<p><u>ELECTED MEMBER PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK PROCEDURES</u></p> <p>The Chair reported that this item had been <u>WITHDRAWN</u> and would be considered at the Special Democratic Services Committee scheduled to be held on 2nd May, 2018.</p>	

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8.	<p><u>DEMOCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS PROGRESS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Performance Manager</p> <p>The Corporate Performance Manager noted the report and appendix which outlined progress on the democratic arrangements in place for the period October 2017 to March 2018. The progress report detailed work undertaken around Member Development, Facilitating the Democratic Process and Scrutiny Support. The Corporate Performance Manager further spoke to the progress report and highlighted the key actions contained therein.</p> <p>A Member referred to the data presented in relation to the WLGA event for new Members and noted that the information was based on 42 Councillors, however there was only 20 new Councillors. The Corporate Performance Manager advised that although the event was for new members there was an opportunity for returning members to attend. She agreed to amend the data to reflect only the new members.</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly</p> <p>Another Member referred to the number of members of the public in the viewing gallery and advised that the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee had recently been held in a local school where pupils and staff were viewed the meeting. The Member felt that this should also be recognised in the performance information.</p>	G. Wasley

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	<p>Another Member referred to the performance information reported for Members Training Sessions and commented that Members should use their own judgement on whether they feel it appropriate to attend the training. Another Member concurred with the comments raised and felt that the sessions are informative for new members, however the more senior members of the Authority would already be familiar with some topics of discussion.</p> <p>The Head of Policy and Performance advised that as agreed some sessions are mandatory. Following discussion the notice to Members of the sessions will be reviewed to indicate the key target audience. Members would need to prioritise which session they attended. She advised that training was arranged to ensure it was pertinent and timely. Some sessions are also established following discussions undertaken with members at their Personal Development Reviews.</p> <p>RESOLVED to recommend that the report be accepted and the Democratic Arrangements Performance Report be recommended to Council for approval.</p>	
9.	<p><u>WEBCASTING OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Head of Policy and Performance and the Corporate Performance Manager.</p> <p>It was reported that previously webcasting of Committee meetings had been grant supported. The facility ceased when the funding was withdrawn by Welsh Government. The Corporate Performance Manager noted that webcasting was still undertaken in other authorities, with some only opting to webcast decision making committees.</p>	

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	<p>It was added that there was no requirement for Councils to undertake webcasting, however with the introduction of the Local Government Reform Bill there could be an expectation placed on Councils to ensure meetings are webcast.</p> <p>A Member referred to previous costs of £42,000 for webcasting which was funded by Welsh Government. He stated that the Council had other priorities at present and felt the Council should not implement this facility until it was imposed on authorities by the Local Government Reform Bill. He further commented that Blaenau Gwent was the poorest Council in Wales and the Authority continued to receive poor settlements. It was important we address our own priorities and also ensure we have the relevant ICT support for Members.</p> <p>The Member welcomed the development of the business case, however he felt that it should not be implemented until authorities was required to webcast meetings and then only undertake the decision making meetings such as Council, Executive and Planning Committee.</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p> <p>The Head of Policy and Performance advised that the business case would review all options which included the ICT infrastructure to support webcasting and would be brought back to a future Democratic Services Committee for options to be considered.</p>	

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	<p>FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, to recommend that the report be accepted and Option 1 be recommended to Council by the Democratic Services Committee that a business case for the provision of webcasting be developed and presented to a future meeting of the Democratic Services Committee.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p><u>ANNUAL REPORT FOR MEMBERS – PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Policy and Performance.</p> <p>The Head of Policy and Performance in her role as designated Head of Democratic Services advised that the report outlined the proposed arrangements to support the development of Annual Reports for Members. She advised that the Council adopted the current format in 2013 which was a standard format across all authorities. However the completion of the reports had not been a great success and there was a risk of non-compliance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure if appropriate arrangements are not in place to assist Members in completing reports. She also noted that the reports are monitored by Welsh Government.</p> <p>The Officer suggested that it would be helpful to bring some good practice examples to the Information Session for Members to provide guidance and support where required.</p>	

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	<p>RESOLVED to recommend that the report be accepted and Option 1 be recommended to Council, namely the Annual Report formal and process be agreed and implemented: The proposed timelines for the 2017/18 Annual Reports be approved with a short Member Information Session to be held on Wednesday, 30th May, 2018 to provide information, guidance and advice to Members in relation to the completion of the templates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Report templates to be issued to Members by Friday, 8th June, 2018. • All completed templates to be electronically (where possible) returned by Friday, 13th July, 2018. • The Annual Reports to be published on the Council's website by the end of August 2018. <p>It was obligatory for senior salary holders to complete an Annual Report.</p>	