

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - 8TH NOVEMBER, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. C. MORGAN (CHAIR)

Councillors B. Summers (Vice-Chair)
M. Cook
M. Day
K. Hayden
S. Healy
H. McCarthy
L. Parsons
K. Pritchard

WITH: Scrutiny Chairs & Vice-Chairs

Councillors J. Hill (substituting for Cllr J. Collins)
J. Holt
C. Meredith
K. Rowson
S. Thomas
H. Trollope

Head of Organisational Development
Service Manager, Performance & Democratic
Organisational Development Manager –
Payroll, Health & Safety

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

No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Collins, M. Cross and G.A. Davies.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 17th September, 2021.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be received as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>DRAFT REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES 2022/23</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development which was presented to inform Members of the proposals contained within the draft report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales for 2022/23.</p> <p>The Organisational Development Manager – Payroll, Health & Safety introduced the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented that although he supported the work of the Remuneration Panel he believed that Members should not be setting their own levels of remuneration. He felt strongly that he could not support the proposed increases due to the position with regard to COVID-19, the Government's low pay offer to Council staff of 1.75% and to NHS workers who had put themselves at risk throughout the pandemic and felt that the UK workforce in general had been treated poorly. He reiterated that on behalf of his group he could not support these increases and hoped those comments would be sent back to the remuneration panel for their deliberations.</p> <p>Another Member agreed with his colleague's comments and said he could not support the increases, and felt that the situation with COVID and the austerity measures could put pressure on annual</p>	

budgets. He enquired regarding the budget with the reduction in Councillor numbers from 42 to 33 next May. The Organisational Development Manager said that based on 33 elected members from May 2022 and adding on the proposed pay increases it was within the current budget, however, if the proposed increases were not agreed there would be a saving to the Authority. The exact figures would not be known until after the May 2022 elections.

In response to a Member's question regarding the report being presented to full Council for approval, the Service Manager Performance & Democratic confirmed that all reports from the Democratic Services Committee were presented to full Council for a decision and the draft IRP Report would be presented to the next full Council meeting.

A Member commented that the Democratic Services Committee could make recommendations around the different points contained within the report and those recommendations would go back to the Remuneration Panel for deliberation along with other recommendations from all 22 Local Authorities across Wales. The final proposal would be presented to full Council in early 2022.

Another Member commented that the report had not taken on board Blaenau Gwent constituents and the impact of COVID, he could not support these increases while some Home Care workers were on the minimum wage and nurses had been offered pay increases under 2%.

Another Member felt that with the reduction of Councillors in the next election it was wrong to increase salaries. He also agreed with his colleague's comments and said that with some people earning the minimum wage and others such as bus drivers on low wages he could not support the increases. Other Members also endorsed these comments.

A Member asked for clarification on senior salaries, the Organisational Development Manager clarified that Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary cannot receive a salary from any NPA or FRA to which they have been appointed, they remain eligible to claim travel and subsistence expenses only. Band 3 would be able to receive a salary from the NPA or FRA to which they are appointed.

In relation to ICT training, the Service Manager advised Members

that they were currently in the process of preparing the Induction Programme for the new Council in May and ICT was a key part of that programme.

In response to a Member's question, the Organisational Development Manager advised that other than the proposed pay increases to elected Members and also the co-optees every other detail contained within the report remained the same from the previous year.

At the invitation of the Chair a Member proposed to recommend that the Democratic Services Committee did not support the increases in remuneration as set out in the draft IRPW proposals for 2022/23, however, the report be presented to Council for consideration of all other aspects of the report.

This proposal was seconded.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously

AGREED to recommend to Council that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that the Democratic Services Committee did not support the increases in remuneration as set out in the draft IRPW proposals for 2022/23, however, the report be presented to Council for consideration of all other aspects of the report.
