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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 30th November, 2020 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Jones (Chairman)
County Councillor D. Evans (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: P. Clarke, M.Groucutt, G. Howard, J.Treharne,
J.Watkins and S. Woodhouse

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

John Pearson	Local Democracy Manager
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Matthew Gatehouse	Head of Policy and Governance

APOLOGIES:

Councillors

1. To note the appointment of County Councillor D.W.H. Jones as Chair of Democratic Services Committee

We noted the appointment of County Councillor D. Jones as Chair of Democratic Services Committee.

2. To appoint a Vice Chair

The Committee appointed County Councillor D. Evans as Vice-Chair.

3. Declarations of interest

None.

4. Public Open Forum

No matters for the Public Open Forum.

5. For Information - IRPW Draft Remuneration Report 2021-2022

The Local Democracy Manager presented the IRPW Draft Remuneration Report 2021-2022.

Members were advised that the report is on consultation and they are able to submit responses if they wish to do so.

There were just few changes in the report, including a small uplift to the basic allowance for Members. There has been a change to the reimbursement of costs of care in that the cap of £403 has been removed.

The Committee resolved to accept the report.

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6. Hybrid Meetings

The Local Democracy Manager referred to the protocol to introduce hybrid meetings discussed at the previous meeting.

Since recent restrictions, a hybrid meeting of Licensing Committee, and Informal Cabinet had been held successfully. There are some tweaks to be made regarding camera positions and sound issues but overall it worked well. Trials will continue depending on restrictions.

Councillor Treharne provided feedback as a remote attendee of the hybrid Licensing Committee meeting. He noted a slight echo during the meeting which was resolved during the meeting. The voting procedures went smoothly and overall the meeting was successful.

The Vice Chair of Planning Committee expressed that the Committee were keen to get back to the Chamber as soon as possible.

7. Consultation - Changes to Adoption Absence for Members

The Committee received a report to consider submitting a response to Welsh Government on the changes to adoption absence for local authority members.

Welsh Ministers intend to amend the 2013 regulations to increase the adopter's absence entitlement from 2 weeks to 26 weeks. This will result in the same levels of maternity and adopter's absence being available under the 2013 regulations.

Members were invited to comment and provide responses to the consultation.

Members welcomed the amendments, and recognised the importance of supporting adoptive parents, the same as birth parents.

8. Forward Work Programme Engagement

The Head of Policy and Governance presented the report to identify the implications of the pandemic for the work of the committee in seeking to broaden involvement in local democracy and ensure that the committee remains sighted on recent additions to the Cabinet and Council forward planner to identify those topics of most interest to communities where early and effective engagement can add most value.

Members were keen to progress with engagement but felt that in light of the current restrictions it best to defer the item to the next meeting.

9. Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales - County Council proposals.

The Local Democracy Manager advised Members that the proposals from the Boundary Commission for the new County Council seats for the 2022 elections are due to be published on 10th December 2020. An update would be circulated in due course.

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10. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th September were confirmed as an accurate record.

11. Date of next meeting: Monday 18th January 2021, 14:00pm

Noted.

The meeting ended at 2.45 pm

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