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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 10th February, 2020 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor J.Watkins (Chairman)
County Councillor D. Evans (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Dovey, M.Groucutt, L.Jones, J.Treharne,
S. Woodhouse and A.Davies

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Matthew Gatehouse	Head of Policy and Governance

APOLOGIES:

Councillors P. Clarke and F. Taylor

1. Declarations of absence

None.

2. Public Open Forum

No matters for the public open forum.

3. Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill

The Head of Policy and Governance presented a report to provide members with an overview of the proposals contained within the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill.

The main points of the Bill were highlighted, and Members were invited to comment.

It was expressed that should this Authority think to change the method of voting, there should be impartially delivered, informative Members' seminars to provide full detail. The Head of Policy and Governance agreed that this would be a decision for Members after a wealth of information has been received.

The Chair added that here in Wales there are already three different types of voting system and did not think it would be too difficult to adapt. It was also suggested that it would be beneficial that this be added to school curriculum to educate and prepare young people, especially considering the reduction of voting age.

In response to a request for clarification around delivery of petitions we heard that more detail would follow within the guidance, following which we can make recommendations.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and was pleased to see the attempts to promote democracy.

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4. Draft IRPW Report 2020/21

The Head of Policy and Governance presented the draft determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for the civic year 2020/2021.

A summary of the updated determinations in this draft report to the 2019/20 report are:

- The basic salary for members will increase to £14,218.
- Remuneration for the executive, civic roles and committee chairs will increase in line with the uplift in the basic salary.
- Similar uplifts to the basic and chairs salary have been determined for members of national parks and fire authorities.

The Committee resolved to note and receive the draft determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

5. Member Training and Development Strategy

The Committee received a report to consider and approve the Members Training and Development Strategy.

The strategy builds on previous discussions at Democratic Services Committee meetings and creates potential for Members to self-assess.

We discussed the introduction of e-learning which is currently being considered. The intention is to have e-learning in place in readiness for the next Council elections in 2022, therefore assisting with the induction process.

Members agreed that the previous induction process had been overwhelming and electronic, bite-size sessions would be helpful.

Commendation was given to the Scrutiny Manager regarding Scrutiny Training, particularly the joint sessions with TCBC.

The Chair asked for information around the results of the questionnaire issued to Members. The Head of Policy and Governance agreed to follow this up.

6. Update - Make your Mark Youth Conference

It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting, ensuring invite is issued to Charlie Jade Atkins to attend the meeting on 30th March 2020.

7. Members IT

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The report was presented to support the discussion with regards to Members IT issues, added to the agenda at the request of members.

We heard that amongst the issues, 2 or 3 Members have recurring problems with being 'locked out'. It was thought that there may be a potential solution for this.

Officers will be looking to send out an additional request for information, to include:

- Structured questions to understand problems.
- Offer of one to one sessions with Head of Policy and Governance or Digital Officers.
- Individual workshops.
- Finding most effective solutions to problems.

Members agreed the survey would be useful and suggested that the importance should be stressed when issuing to Members.

8. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and signed by the Chair.

With regards to Cabinet Members attendance at meetings, we heard that Cabinet Members attendance at the invite of the Committee is considered the right and effective way forward.

It was suggested that the Sub-Group be reformed to specifically look at public participation and the notice period of public questions being submitted to full Council.

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm

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