

No.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 25th November, 2024.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson (Chair); Councillor N.C. Thomas (Vice-Chair); Councillors G. Bruce, G.D.D. Carroll, E. Goodjohn, S.D Perkes and K.P. Mahoney.

Also present: Councillors J.E. Charles and E. Penn.

ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors H.C. Hamilton, S.C. Hanks and J. Protheroe.

MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 16th July, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, Dr. I.J. Johnson, S.D. Perkes and N.C. Thomas advised that with regard to Agenda Item No. 4 – Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report 2025/25 – it be noted that they received a Senior Salary Allowance, with the declaration being made for transparency purposes only.

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26 (HDS) –

The Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer presented the report which apprised Members of the draft Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Annual Report for 2025/26 and its supplementary review report of the remuneration for lay members of Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). In accordance with the

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requirements of Section 147 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the IRPW was required to publish an Annual Report, which would have effect for the financial year 2025/26. Any representations on the draft IRPW Annual Report and the supplementary report on CJs were to be submitted to the IRPW Secretariat by no later than 29th November, 2024. Any Member may forego all or some of their entitlement in any one year by notifying the Head of Democratic Services in writing. Appendix C to the report had been prepared as a response to the determinations for the Committee's consideration and / or approval.

The Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer advised that all other determinations that had previously been made by panel were not included within this draft still remained. Additionally, further context was provided noting that the Panel advised that they believed fair and reasonable levels of remuneration were crucial to local democracy and had therefore continued to align levels of remuneration for Elected Members of Principal Councils, National Park and Fire and Rescue Authorities within the context of average Welsh earnings by using the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings within Wales (ASHE) published by Office for National Statistics (ONS) as the main benchmark for setting remuneration. It was also noted that the IRPW report had also been circulated to all Members of the Council, including Co-opted and Lay Members, who all had the opportunity to make their own additional recommendations.

Determinations were then discussed as below- :

- (1) **Determination 1** – The basic level of salary for Elected Members of Principal Councils was set at £19,771, a 6% rise from 2023/24 (in line with ASHE data) –

Councillor Thomas asked if the Council was in a position to know if individual responses had been made to the IRPW by Councillors, the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer advised that this information was not available. Councillor Thomas emphasised that the determinations were in line with national data, and accepted that the salary changes reflected the changes made nationally and supported the recommendation. Councillor Carroll indicated that he did not support the recommendations and believed them to be inappropriate reflecting upon the situation the public faced, with regard to proposed increases being above inflation. Councillor Perkes in agreement with Councillor Thomas' comments said that based upon the Welsh national average for the level of work, an increase was necessary to continue to encourage people to participate in democracy.

Councillor Bruce queried whether the remuneration was based upon a 3-day week and sought to understand if there was evidence surrounding the volume of work being undertaken by Councillors. Councillor Dr. Johnson advised that the IRPW reviewed this frequently and had reached the conclusion that the work of a Councillor was based upon 60% of what an average worker did. Councillor Bruce asked if there was a means for Councillors to be asked surrounding their volume of work, to which Councillor Dr. Johnson responded that the Panel conducted surveys and focus groups to ascertain this information.

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It was subsequently agreed that the response at Appendix C to the report be accepted.

- (2) **Determination 2** – The salary of a Leader of the largest (Group A) Council will be £74,141.

No comments were raised by the Committee, with the response as contained within Appendix C to the report being agreed.

- (3) **Determination 3** – The salary of a chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be £9,886. The salary of vice-chair will be £4,943.

No comments were raised by the Committee with the response as contained within Appendix C to the report being agreed.

- (4) **Determination 4** – The basic pay of members of National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities has been increased. All payments are set out in Table 2. All current Determinations, including restrictions on receiving double allowances, will be published on our website. Other than the above increases, there are no changes proposed this year.

No comments were raised by the Committee with the response as contained within Appendix C to the report being agreed.

- (5) **Determination 5** – For co-opted member payments, the Panel proposes there should be local flexibility for the relevant officer to decide when it will be appropriate to apply a day or a half day rate or to use an hourly rate where it is sensible to aggregate a number of short meetings. The full and half day rates remain unchanged from 2024 to 2025. The only change is the stipulation of hourly rates, as set out in Table 3.

The Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer advised that at a recent meeting of Heads of Democratic Services in Wales where a representative from the IRPW had been present it was highlighted that payments to co-opted and lay members had not been increased for sometime. Reference was also made to the increase in responsibilities for co-opted and lay members as a result of the Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021. Councillor Thomas said the expectations on Lay Members was high commenting that they played an important role in ensuring the Council was working effectively, and as such required a high calibre of individual who should be remunerated to reflect this. Councillor Dr. Johnson also said that the work undertaken by co-opted and lay members in contributing to the Council was important and that a suitable rate should be applied having regard to the role. Councillor Perkes in response said she supported the views of Councillor Thomas' and Councillor Dr. Johnson.

- (6) **Determination 6** – Co-opted lay members of a Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) will be paid on the same basis as co-opted members with voting rights of other bodies within the local government family, as set out in Table 4.

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No comments were raised by the Committee with the response as contained within Appendix C to the report being agreed.

- (7) **Determination 7** – Members of Community and Town Councils will be paid £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a week) towards the extra household expenses (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of working from home. And Councils must either pay their members £52 a year for the cost of office consumables required to carry out their role, or alternatively councils must enable members to claim full reimbursement for the cost of their office consumables.

Councillor Dr. Johnson in referring to the fact that several Members of the Committee were also Members of Town and Community Councils said they could respond individually to the consultation if they wished to do so.

No further comments were raised by the Committee with regard to the response as contained within Appendix C to the report being agreed.

- (8) **Determination 8** – Compensation for financial loss is an optional payment.

No further comments were raised by the Committee with the response as contained within Appendix C to the report being agreed.

- (9) **Determination 9** – The Panel proposes that from September 2024, the returns need only show the total amounts paid in respect of the mandatory payments mentioned above. That is the £156 contribution to the costs of working from home and the £52 set rate consumables allowance and the travel and subsistence expenses paid. This brings these in line with the reporting of the costs of care and personal assistance allowances.

No further comments were raised by the Committee with the response as contained within Appendix C to the report being agreed.

Although not a matter for determination under the consultation Councillor Penn (not a Committee Member but with permission to speak) highlighted that the reimbursement of care and childcare expenses were subject to tax by HMRC. Councillor Penn said that he considered this to be unfair upon Members who may seek reimbursement for such responsibilities. The Committee agreed to include the comments in the consultation response to the IRPW.

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' (IRPW) draft Annual Report 2025/26 proposals and its Supplementary Report on the Review of Remuneration for Lay Members of Corporate Joint Committees be noted.

(2) T H A T the draft responses to the IRPW Determinations as set out in Appendix C to the report be approved, subject to the following additions -

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- Determination 5 – That the Committee notes the important work being carried out by Co-opted and Lay Members in contributing to the work of the Council and that a suitable allowance should be applied having regard to the responsibilities of the roles.
- That the Committee considers that the reimbursement of care and child care expenses should not be subject to tax as it had a detrimental impact on those Members who may seek reimbursement for such responsibilities..

Reasons for decisions

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) Having regard to discussions at the meeting and in order for the comments to be submitted on behalf of the Council by the consultation deadline of 29th November, 2024.