

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2024

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2024
AT 10:00**

Present Virtual

Councillor T Thomas – Chairperson

H T Bennett
I M Spiller

RM Granville
G Walter

M L Hughes
E D Winstanley

RM James

Apologies for Absence

P Ford
Rachel Keepins

Officers:

Laura Griffiths
Michael Pitman
Nimi Chandrasena

The Group Manager - Legal and Democratic Services
Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services
Democratic Services Officer - Support

Declarations of Interest

None

**17. Independent Remuneration Panel For Wales Draft Annual Report
2025/26**

Decision Made	<p>The Group Manager - Legal and Democratic Services presented the report, providing the committee with an update on the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) draft Annual Report for the municipal year 2025/26 .</p> <p>Discussions took place regarding the following aspects mentioned in the report :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work of a Councillor was based on assessment of a 3 day week. The assessment was undertaken in 2021 and may require a review within the current working patterns.• More guidance to be provided on job shares• The members felt that the existing Panel did not reflect diversity and would like due regard and understanding that councils operate in diverse communities.• There was insufficient information on the IRPW website and members would like supplementary information to be readily available.• A member asked for clarification on the remuneration of the members of the joint Overview Scrutiny Committee.• Members would like further information regarding how the new Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru would exercise the functions of the Panel moving forward.• Members suggested that a letter to the Chair expressing their thanks for the work done by the outgoing Panel is sent.• A member agreed with Deputy Leader's comments made during a previous meeting regarding no remuneration for RPB and PSB, members would like this raised as they felt the boards undertook a massive amount of work. <p>RESOLVED : The committee noted and discussed the content of the report . It was agreed that a response would be provided in respect of the IRPW Draft Annual Report 2025/26. They agreed that any response of the Committee be submitted to the IRPW and the WLGA by the deadline of 29 November 2024.</p>
Date Decision Made	21/11/2024

18. Democratic Services Committee Forward Work Programme

Decision Made	<p>The Group Manager - Legal and Democratic Services presented the report for the Committee's consideration and further development. She invited members to put forward their suggestions for future development and also mentioned that the Portal Working group was ongoing and requested members to express their interest should they wish to be part of the group.</p> <p>Members inquired about a progress update from the Portal Working Group and it was agreed that this is to be expected at the next meeting scheduled in June 2025</p> <p>RESOLVED : Members considered the proposed draft Forward Work Programme for the Democratic Services Committee attached at Appendix A and provided comments and suggestions for further items for the Committee to consider at its future meetings.</p>
Date Decision Made	21/11/2024

19. Member Development Programme Update

Decision Made	<p>The Group Manager - Legal and Democratic Services presented the report, the purpose of which was to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Provide the Committee with an update on the delivery of the Council's Member Training and Development Programme and related activitiesb) Request the Committee to identify any further topics for inclusion in the Member Development Programme. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members suggested that it would be beneficial that a reminder is sent out to all Members stressing the importance of completing e-Learning modules. It was suggested that this was also raised at next Group Leader's meeting so they can encourage their members to complete training.• Members would like to explore the ability to put training completion on the website to ensure transparency with the public.• Further 'drop in' sessions to be arranged to help Members complete e-Learning modules• Clear identification to be given as to whether sessions were mandatory – Members preferred a distinction being made for development sessions and e-Learning sessions that were mandatory
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	<p>and discretionary as they had sometimes undertaken similar courses were within their employment which they considered as a duplication if they had to complete the BCBC courses too.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reminders for Member Development training and e-Learning were too generic, members requested that they were more specific.• Members stated they would like a briefing on the current position of the Mod.Gov application and requested that there were more sessions introduced to bring all members up to date prior to the 'go-live' date.• Suggestions were made for future development sessions to be undertaken to educate members on anti-extremism, minorities, extremist ideologies, DWP for cost of living and information briefings with V2C. <p><u>RESOLVED</u> : The Committee agreed to note the report and appendices. They identified additional Member development topics and briefings for inclusion in the Member Development Programme and made suggestions for completion and transparency of Learning and Development undertaken.</p>
Date Decision Made	21/11/2024

20. Research Support and Services For Councillors - Protocol

Decision Made	<p>The Group Manager - Legal and Democratic Services presented the report to update members on the existing research support available to Elected Members and to seek direction for the development of a Research Support and Services Protocol for Elected Members.</p> <p>She stated that an initial assessment undertaken had been attached at Appendix A, and invited members views on how a protocol can collectively be put together. She stressed that while some local authorities had dedicated research officers who undertake detailed external research for members, BCBC had limitations on resource and capacity. The Group Manager - Legal and Democratic Services stated that though the statutory guidance was not provided within the meeting documents, this could be provided if required.</p> <p>Members made the following observations and discussed :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They would like more financial and budgetary info shared. It was noted that only those members on BREP were privileged to the information.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members mentioned that it was not easy to locate information on the current Portal• Member noted the Local Government Information Unit was a very useful resource facility for Cllrs but apparently came at a cost. They suggested consideration being given to cost / benefit.• It was suggested that a monthly email / briefing was sent out advising Members on resource and information available and at their disposal as it would be useful to signpost. <p><u>RESOLVED</u> : Members noted the content of the report as the basis for developing a Research Support and Services Protocol for Elected Members including the initial assessment attached at Appendix A. They provided suggestions and comments on how information could be made more accessible to Members, for consideration and inclusion in the Protocol.</p>
Date Decision Made	21/11/2024

21. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	21/11/2024

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this [link](#)

The meeting closed at 10:55