

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2025

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2025 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor T Thomas – Chairperson

S Aspey
D T Harrison
E D Winstanley

H T Bennett
M L Hughes

P Ford
I M Spiller

RM Granville
G Walter

Apologies for Absence

RM James

Officers:

Nimi Chandrasena
Rachel Keepins

Democratic Services Officer - Support
Democratic Services Manager

Declarations of Interest

None

32. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED</u> That the minutes of meetings of the Democratic Services Committee dated 26/06/2025 were approved as a true and accurate record
Date Decision Made	20/11/2025

33. DBCC Draft Annual Report 2026-27

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report, presented by the Democratic Services Manager, was to provide the Committee with an update on the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC) Draft Annual Remuneration Report 2026/27, for Members to provide views on its content as part of the consultation process.</p> <p>The Democratic Services Manager drew members attention to the previous meeting of the Committee where it was mentioned that following an independent 10-year review of the Independent remuneration Panel Wales in 2021 and as a result of the elections and elected bodies Wales Act 2024 being passed in July 2024, the panel's functions transferred over to what is now the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru as at the 1st of April 2025. She stated that the DBCC was expected to produce draft annual report for consultation and take account of responses prior to publishing the final report in February 2026. The panel was required to respond to the following points of determination :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic Salary for Elected Members of Principal Councils• Salaries paid to Senior, Civic and Presiding members of Principal Councils• Salaries for Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees (JOSC) – Determination• Payments to Fire and Rescue Authorities• Co-opted members of principal councils, Fire and Rescue Authorities and lay members of Corporate Joint Committees (CJC) <p>The members discussed the recommended rate of increase and inflation. They also discussed the disparity between the employment position banding and were not entirely satisfied with possible public perception if the increase was implemented.</p> <p>Members agreed that the focus needed to be on May 2027, at the point of the electoral review and ensure that the right terms and conditions would be in place to attract new candidates, who were qualified and were able to step forward without any financial consideration.</p> <p>They added that they felt it was important to attract diverse people join as councilors to represent their communities, however, if the current pay structure remained, it would only attract those who were already retired or had another source of income.</p> <p>A member suggested that members remuneration followed a similar scale to officers whereby there was a minimum base and they rose up the scale depending on individual performance.</p> <p>The Chairperson suggested an investigation into the barriers faced when trying to attract future candidates whilst taking into consideration the impact on public perception.</p> <p>A member stated that many people did not come into the role of an Authority Councillor for financial reasons. They did so to try and help and serve their community. He was therefore uncomfortable with the idea that if stood for re-election in 18 months time, and not be elected, that a member expected to gain a</p>
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financial recompense.

Members suggested that newly elected members should be of the clear understanding that their time in position is limited as they may not get re-elected at the next election, as such members need to have a clear understanding of the financial implications of not being re-elected.

The Democratic Services Manager encouraged Members to make comments on proposals, such as the resettlement, the Framework and Methodology for Remuneration of Senior Roles across Principal Councils and Corporate Joint Committees and examine the current benchmark linked to the Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings, alongside an evaluation of members' workloads with the knowledge that members were considering these aspects in advance, due to be presented to members in 2026.

RESOLVED

In relation to the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC) Draft Annual Report for the municipal year 2026/27 the Committee expressed diversity of opinion in relation to the 6.4% increase to the basic salary increase for Councillors. Members highlighted that whilst this was in line with all-Wales 2024 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), the proposed increase was written at a time when the UK inflation rate was at 3.2%. Concerns were expressed about this significant gap and the fact that this could result in very negative public perception of Councillors and Local Government as a whole.

Whilst noting this, there were also concerns from the Committee that sufficient provision had to be put in place to ensure that certain groups are not disincentivised as potential candidates in the 2027 Local Government Elections. Members noted that the financial aspect should not become a barrier preventing individuals from standing, especially from marginalised groups.

The Committee felt that there was a fine balance between the two that needed to be considered and monitored, particularly for any new Framework for 2027 onwards. A balance to prevent a greater divide between the public and local government that also didn't discourage or exclude any potential candidates from putting themselves forward as a future Councillor to represent their community. Whilst appreciating that the purpose of using the ASHE was to try and align salaries to national average, the proposal was made for keeping Councillor salaries in line with current inflation rates.

Further comment was also made in relation to the disparity between Bands 1 and 2 within the report, for Leader and Deputy Leader. Members proposed that this be considered as part of the new framework and whether this gap was too large and needed addressing. Members also suggested that consideration be given to splitting the bands for Councillor salaries (as with staff), to have performance-based levels within each band.

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	<p>On the subject of resettlement payments for councillors who are unsuccessful when seeking re-election, the Committee agreed that this did not sit comfortably with them. Whilst understanding that for some roles, such as that of an Executive Member, councillors may have given up other jobs to commit to these positions, the Committee agreed that councillors are fully aware and understand the risk when putting themselves forward in an election; the risk that, whether new or returning, the title could be limited to one term of 5 years. There was also the view that councillors don't always go into roles for financial reasons and wanted to do so for the good of their community. Any financial recompense, therefore, should not be necessary and would again risk public perception of Councillors and Local Government.</p>
Date Decision Made	20/11/25

34. Member Development Programme Update

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report, presented by the Democratic Services Manager, was to provide the Committee with an update on :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) The delivery of the Council's Member Training and Development Programme and related activities; These were detailed in Appendix A of the report and the Democratic Services Manager explained that training requests were forthcoming from officers and members which was found to be useful as training was targeted to needs.b) Request the Committee to identify any further topics for inclusion in the Member Development Programme. These were detailed in Appendix B and the Democratic Services Manager stated that the team were in the process of getting dates and sessions confirmed with the providers some of which were external parties. <p>E-Learning modules for members was discussed and information in relation to e-learning was detailed in Appendix C. The Democratic Services Manager explained that E-Learning comprised of new and refresher sessions as directed by the Learning and Development team of the Authority. She explained that while the refresher modules had been completed before, there was a mandatory requirement that refresher sessions were completed as and when directed by Learning and Development, as such, it was recommended that members be vigilant about information on the E-Learning dashboards.</p> <p>The Democratic Services Manager drew member's attention to Paragraph 3.17 of the report and stated</p>
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	<p>that the committee was required look at the new Member induction following the elections for 2027 by way of a working group. This method had previously proven to be successful and she was looking for committee members to utilise their own knowledge and experience and also those of other Members, based on the survey, to progress a working group.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>The Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Noted the report and appendices• Members suggested that a working group is formed to progress future Member Development ,had representation across the political parties and ensured a gender balance• Challenges faced with the current e-learning system were discussed and it was agreed that it would be a topic that the working group progressed in readiness for new members who may join after the elections. It was understood that some of the challenges with the e-learning system could be due to budgetary constraints, as was the case with staff at hand to help from the learning and development team.• A member suggested that an awareness session of being alert to right wing attitudes in the community was introduced.• It was agreed that the working group comprised of the following members : Cllr Martin Hughes, Cllr Ian Spiller, Cllr Timothy Thomas and Cllr Sean Aspey with a provision to be extended to all elected members, should they wish to be part of the working group.
Date Decision Made	20/11/25

35. WG Consultation on Live Streaming meetings

Decision Made	<p>The purpose of this report, presented by the Democratic Services Manager, was for the Committee to consider the Welsh Government consultation on extending the duty on local authorities to broadcast meetings, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whether the duty on a Principal Council to broadcast meetings should be extended to include meetings other than that of the full council• Whether there should be a duty imposed upon Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and/or National Park Authorities (NPAs) to broadcast their meetings
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- Whether there should be a retention period for recordings of broadcast meetings

Members agreed the importance in offering transparency by allowing Council meetings to be open to the public where possible.

They discussed the cost implications of technology and staffing required and also the means of storing recordings for a period of time.

The Democratic Services Manager responded that recordings were currently stored online on Youtube's platform, but the Democratic Services Team researching alternatives and further options for storage along with any that may be awarded with the new conferencing system.

In terms of staffing, the Democratic Services Manager stated that there would still need a minimum of two members of staff allocated to a meeting with one fully concentrating on the live stream process and the other on the minutes.

She further explained the process of Live Streaming to members and stated the advantage of live streaming as opposed to providing the link to the meeting.

The Democratic Services Manager stated that she would consult her counterparts in other local authorities to establish best practices.

The Chairperson summarised that the committee were supportive of the proposals but also wanted an assurance from the Welsh Government on how challenges with financial and staff resources would be met.

RESOLVED

- The Committee expressed a general positive response to the proposal for extending the duty on principal councils to broadcast meetings beyond that of just full council with the proposal that all statutory meetings of principal councils be live streamed. This was based on member support for the principle of transparency and accessibility and offering the public more opportunity to engage in local authority meetings.
- Support was also expressed for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and National Park Authorities (NPAs) to also broadcast their meetings, possibly with a phased approach, starting with their main meetings and expanding out, similar to that undertaken by principal councils.
- Members also agreed that an approved specified retention period for recordings of broadcast meetings would be useful for all LAs to adhere to, similar to that required for minutes.

There were concerns, however, regarding the potential need for additional resource required, both financial and staffing, in order to support these changes for principal councils, FRAs and NRAs. Whilst the introduction of AI could potentially assist with future support for meetings, it was the view of the Committee that if it is to become mandatory for all meetings to be live streamed and recordings to be

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	archived for a specified time period, consideration should be given to an agreed Framework and platform, along with financial support, to provide this. The rationale being to meet the legislative requirement for openness and transparency whilst avoiding creating any undue burden on any one individual local authority.
Date Decision Made	20/11/25

36. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	20/11/25

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

The meeting closed at 11:18.