

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>11 MARCH 2026</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU (DBCC) ANNUAL REMUNERATION REPORT 2026/27</b>
<b>Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member</b>	<b>MONITORING OFFICER</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>RACHEL KEEPINS DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules in respect of this report.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p><b>This report sets out the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC) Annual Report for the financial year 2026-27.</b></p> <p><b>The DBCC have taken on the responsibility of setting the determinations on pay, expenses and benefits for members of principal councils, community and town councils, fire and rescue authorities and national park authorities from 1 April 2026.</b></p> <p><b>For its Annual Report for 2026-27 the main elements of change affecting the Authority include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>• Basic Salary for Elected Members of Principal Councils – Determination 1;</b></li> <li><b>• Salaries paid to Senior, Civic and Presiding members of Principal Councils – Determination 2;</b></li> <li><b>• Salaries for Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees (JOSC) – Determination 3;</b></li> <li><b>• Payments to Fire and Rescue Authorities – Determination 4;</b></li> <li><b>• Payments made to Co-opted members of principal councils, Fire and Rescue Authorities and lay members of Corporate Joint Committees - Determination 5</b></li> </ul>

	<p><b>The report also refers to areas that are being reviewed by the Commission for future consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Resettlement payments for councillors who are unsuccessful when seeking re-election;</b></li> <li>• <b>The remuneration framework for senior roles in principal councils and corporate joint committees;</b></li> <li>• <b>The methodology for annual uprating, including considering whether the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings remains the most appropriate measure;</b></li> </ul>
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## **1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is present Council with the Annual Report of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC) in respect of the level and range of remuneration the Authority must make available to its elected members for the 2026-27 municipal year. Council is asked to approve and adopt the determinations of the Panel, approve the posts who will receive a senior/civic salary and agree the revised Scheme of Remuneration effective from 1 April 2026.

## **2. Background**

2.1 Following an independent ten-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 the DBCC on 1 April 2025.

2.2 As the Panel was required, and in accordance with the requirements of Section 147 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the DBCC is expected to produce a draft Annual Report for consultation and take account of responses prior to publishing a final Report by 28 February each year. The Report sets out the proposed determinations on pay, expenses and benefits for members of principal councils, community and town councils, fire and rescue authorities and national park authorities from 1 April 2026.

2.3 The report highlights that substantive changes to the remuneration framework will only be made once in each electoral cycle, prior to each local government election, with those in between focusing on annual uprating. Consequently, this report for 2026-27 considers uprating amounts where appropriate but leaves the framework unchanged. The next report, for 2027-28, which is required to published by the end of February 2027, will update the framework for those members who will be elected at the May 2027 local elections.

2.4 In making its determinations the Panel states that its goal continues to be to ensure that levels of remuneration are fair and reasonable to support elected members and to encourage diversity of representation. In doing so the Panel looked to align levels of remuneration for elected members of Principal Councils, Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs), National Park and Fire and Rescue Authorities within the context of average Welsh earnings, using the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

within Wales (ASHE) published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as the main benchmark for setting remuneration.

2.5 The draft Annual Report was considered by the Democratic Services Committee on 20 November 2025. The Committee's response included several comments on the draft DBCC report 2026-27. These are listed below:

- 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.
- 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.

2.6 The above comments and proposals were duly forwarded to the DBCC for their consideration.

- 2.7 According to the DBCC report, a number of the consultation responses expressed concern with the continued application of Office of National Statistics (ONS) data on median salaries in Wales, and the increase that has indicated for the final year of the local government electoral cycle. It was however determined to retain the link to ASHE for this report but that they would consult on the index to be used for increases across the next electoral cycle as part of the work towards the 2027-28 report. Overall, the Commission concluded to adopt the draft determinations as presented.
- 2.8 The Commission's Determinations for 2026-27 are summarised on page 13 of the Annual Report (attached as **Appendix A**). The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 places a duty on Relevant Authorities to comply with requirements imposed on them in annual reports published by the Commission.

### **3. Current situation/ proposal**

- 3.1 The DBCC Report is attached at **Appendix A** and proposes some changes to the current remuneration prescribed for Elected Members at Principal (County Borough) and Town and Community Council levels. The following paragraphs summarise the key elements of the report for the Authority.

#### **3.2 Basic Salary for Elected Members of Principal Councils – Determination 1**

- 3.2.1 The Commission has reviewed the time commitment for Councillors in relation to their responsibility of community representation and participation in the scrutiny, regulatory and related functions of local governance. No changes are proposed for 2026-27 with the Commission agreeing the average work commitment of an elected councillor of a principal council as a full time equivalent of three working days a week.
- 3.2.2 The Commission has determined that for the financial year 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027 it is right to retain the link between the basic salary of councillors and the average salaries of their constituents. The basic salary will be aligned with three fifths of the all-Wales 2024 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, the latest figure available at the time of writing. The basic salary will be £21,044, an increase of 6.4% on 2025-26.

#### **3.3 Salaries paid to Senior, Civic and Presiding members of Principal Councils – Determination 2**

- 3.3.1 The number of senior salaries available to this Authority remains unchanged at 18 based on a review undertaken in 2021 of differentials and market comparators. No changes to the banding have been proposed. The Senior salaries will therefore be increased at the same rate as basic salaries.
- 3.3.2 The ASHE related uplift will also apply to the role element of the Leader, Deputy Leader, Executive Members, Committee Chairs (if paid), the Leader of the largest opposition group and the Leader of other political groups (if paid), (Bands 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5).
- 3.3.3 The senior salaries for 2026-27 are summarised in Table 1 of **Appendix A**.

### 3.4 Salaries for Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees (JOSC) – Determination 3

3.4.1 The salary of a chair of a JOSC will continue to be aligned to Band 3 and will be set at £10,522, with the salary of a vice-chair being set at 50% of the Chair and will be £5,261. There are no other changes in this area.

### 3.5 Payments to Fire and Rescue Authorities – Determination 4

3.5.1 The three Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in Wales: Mid and West Wales, North Wales and South Wales were formed as part of Local Government re-organisation in 1996. FRAs comprise elected members who are nominated by the Principal Councils within each fire and rescue service area.

3.5.2 In line with the Panel's decision to increase the basic salary of elected members of principal councils, the remuneration level for ordinary members of FRAs is also increased in line with ASHE.

3.5.3 The remuneration for Chairs will remain linked to a Band 3 senior salary of principal councils, therefore, there will be a small increase to the role element of their pay. Deputy Chairs, Committee Chairs and other senior roles will remain linked to Band 5. Further details of this are provided below:

#### **Fire and Rescue Authorities**

Basic salary for ordinary member	£2,968
Chair	£13,490
Deputy Chair (where appointed)	£7,177
Committee Chair or other senior post	£7,177

### 3.6 Co-opted members of principal councils, Fire and Rescue Authorities and lay members of Corporate Joint Committees (CJC) - Determination 5

3.6.1 The Commission state that Principal council and FRAs must pay their co-opted members who have voting rights fees at the rates as outlined in Table 4 of the report. It also states that these payments equally apply to CJC lay members with voting rights from 31 July 2024.

3.6.2 The appropriate officer within the authority must set in advance whether a meeting is programmed for a full or half day. When the meeting is set for a full day, the fee will be paid on this basis even if the meeting finishes within 4 hours. The Commission has determined there should be local flexibility for the appropriate 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 relevant protocol will be updated by the Monitoring Officer and circulated to Members.

3.7 The Commission report states that all other determinations from previous years are unchanged and are incorporated into the report for completeness. These include:

- The limit (known as the cap) for the number of salaries payable to senior, civic and presiding members of Principal Councils

- Restrictions on senior post remuneration
- Restrictions on payment for posts outside the principal council
- Support to elected members of principal councils
- Specific or additional senior salaries and assistants to the executive
- Local Government Pension Scheme
- Family absence provisions for elected members of principal councils
- Sick leave payments for senior salary holders of principal councils
- Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) travel and subsistence
- Payments to Fire and Rescue Authorities – restrictions
- Co-opted members of principal councils, Fire and Rescue Authorities and lay members of Corporate Joint Committees - Travel and subsistence, support, meeting preparation time, care and personal assistance.
- Travel and subsistence expenses
- Costs of Care and Personal Assistance Payments

3.8 Further to the above, the report also highlights further areas that are being reviewed for future consideration:

- Resettlement payments for councillors who are unsuccessful when seeking re-election;
- The remuneration framework for senior roles in principal councils and corporate joint committees;
- The methodology for annual uprating, including considering whether the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings remains the most appropriate measure.

3.9 In line with the DBCC report, the revised Members' Schedule of Remuneration for Bridgend is attached at **Appendix B**.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 The Annual Report contributes to the well-being goals identified in the Act. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act to encourage more diverse representation among Councillors and Co-opted Members. A more representative group should be better able to take into account the well-being goals when reviewing services and policies and consider the positive and negative impacts upon future generations, long term community resilience and economic, environmental and social capital.

#### **6. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

6.1 There are no climate change or nature implications as a result of this report.

## 7. **Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications as a result of this report.

## 8. **Financial Implications**

8.1 The changes to the remuneration of Elected Members for the 2026-27 financial year will increase the financial commitment required from this Authority. Some of the cost may be negated by members electing to forgo some or all of their salaries or choosing not to opt into the Local Government Pension Scheme. Only an individual member may communicate in writing to the Monitoring Officer if, as an individual, they wish to decline all or part of the payment to which they are entitled. The additional costs will be met from the centrally held provision for pay and price increases during the 2026-27 financial year.

## 9. **Recommendations**

9.1 It is recommended that Council note the Annual Report for 2026-27 and approve:

- a) The adoption of the relevant Determinations of the Commission contained within the Annual Report (attached as **Appendix A**);
- b) Those posts (shown in the revised Members' Schedule of Remuneration at Schedule 1 of **Appendix B**) who will receive a senior / civic salary;
- c) The revised Members' Schedule of Remuneration (**Appendix B**) and for it to become effective from 1 April 2026;
- d) That the Members' Schedule of Remuneration be updated with any changes subsequently made by Council at the Annual Meeting of Council or during the 2026-2027 municipal year.

## **Background documents**

None