

**Minutes of the Meeting of the DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
held at Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely via video
conference on Friday, 24 March 2023**

PRESENT: Councillor Elizabeth Evans (Chair), Councillors Endaf Edwards, Gwyn James, Gareth Lloyd, Caryl Roberts and Mark Strong

Also in attendance: Councillors Euros Davies, Rhodri Evans and Wyn Thomas

Officers in attendance: Lowri Edwards and Nia Jones

(10.00am - 11.20am)

1 Apologies

None.

2 Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests

None.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising

It was RESOLVED to confirm as true the minutes of the meeting held 16 December 2022.

There were no matters arising.

4 Report on a Members' Survey in relation to ICT requirements

Nia Jones, Corporate Manager Democratic Services presented the report to the Committee noting that 15 responses were received, which is equivalent to 39% of all Members. It was noted that all requests for additional training had been addressed and the comments relating to additional equipment submitted were considered.

Member noted their disappointment that only 15 Members had responded to the survey, and that the main messages from the survey was the need for 4G when working away from the office or home, and the need for a secondary telephone number to separate work and home life.

Members noted that an opt-in £10 monthly allowance was available to them, and that it is possible to purchase a 4G dongle for £11, and a telephone with contract from circa £7.40 per month, which would address these concerns.

Members noted that ICT provision should be reviewed prior to the next election in order to ensure that Councillors' needs are met, taking into consideration any future technological advancements.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

5 Report on a Members' Survey in relation to the Timing of Meetings

Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer presented the report to the Committee noting that it is a statutory requirement to conduct a survey in relation to the times and intervals at which meetings are held taking into consideration the needs and circumstances of all Members.

It was noted that 25 Members responded to the report and that the majority clearly favoured Thursday, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, in that order for attending meetings; with Fridays and Mondays being the least favoured days. It was noted that prior to COVID-19, the normal start time for meetings was at 9.30am, however the majority of respondents noted a preference to continue with a 10.00am start for all Committees and Council.

Councillor Elizabeth Evans noted that the Governance and Audit Committee, and the Licensing Committee currently start at 9.30am and that they would now need to be amended in line with all other meetings. She also noted that a 1.30pm start time for afternoon meetings would improve accessibility for those with childcare responsibility.

A report will be presented to Council outlining the findings of the survey and proposals in terms of the timing of meetings.

6 Report on the Members' annual appraisal survey

Nia Jones, Corporate Manager Democratic Services presented the report to the Committee noting that it is a statutory requirement to provide an annual review of the Members' training and development needs. It was noted that 8 Members have responded to the survey, and that areas identified for further development and training were being addressed, and that these individuals will now be offered an opportunity for an interview with a person who, in the opinion of the authority is suitably qualified to provide advice about the training and development needs of that Member.

Members noted that the number of responses were low, and it was recommended that this be raised with the party Leaders.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

7 Report on Members' Schedule of Remuneration 2023/24

Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer for Democratic Services presented the report to the Committee noting that there are no significant changes to the 2023-24 Schedule of Remuneration. She noted that the basic salary for elected members will increase from £16,800 to £17,600, emphasising that the Council has no discretion in terms of the levels set by the Independent Remuneration Panel. Individual Members that wish to decline the pay increase must communicate their intentions in writing, however the Council as a whole, or any group of councillors cannot do so.

There are discretionary elements to the report. It was noted that there are no proposals to enable Councillors to claim for travelling costs for work within their Wards; or to the travelling subsistence, overnight accommodation and car parking allowance which will remain at the same rate as 2022/23. The £10 monthly opt-in allowance to cover telephone, broadband and any postage costs will remain the same; and it is recommended that the cap of 10 full days for each Committee that Co-opted Members sit on continues. It was noted that this has been an exceptional year for Co-opted Members due to the additional training and support required during their first year in

term, however it is anticipated that this will settle down during the subsequent years.

It was noted that arrangements relating to travelling out of county will continue and that 99% of all requests during the current year were approved as they benefitted both the Council that there was representation.

The IRPW Annual Report 2023 and the draft Members' Schedule of Remuneration 2023/24 will now be presented to Council on the 20th April 2023.

8 Report on Members' Exit Survey Results

Nia Jones, Corporate Manager Democratic Services presented the report to the Committee noting that the results for Ceredigion overall are in line with the Wales average. It was noted that the modal response for the number of years spent in the role of Councillor is 21 – 15 years, equivalent to 4 – 5 terms of Office, and that the average number of hours spent in the role, including community casework was equivalent to 23.4 hours per week.

Members noted the increasing number of hours involved with regards to external organisations' meetings such as the Police, Health and Fire Service, and thanked previous Members for their time and commitment serving Ceredigion County Council.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

9 Forward work programme

Members noted the reports proposed for the Forward Work Programme, and it was noted that draft guidance have now been received in relation to the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021, and that additional reports would result from this.

10 Any other matter which the Chairman decides is for the urgent attention of the Committee

Members noted their concern regarding the ongoing problem of the audio cutting out during meetings, noting that this is now happening for an extended period of time of circa 5 – 6 seconds. Members were reassured that this was being looked into and discussions are ongoing with ICT.

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held
on 26 May 2023**

Chairman: _____

Date: _____