



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Democratic Services Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 8 November 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present:

Councillor(s)

J E Burtonshaw
L James
W G Lewis
L V Walton

Councillor(s)

N J Davies
M Jones
B J Rowlands
L J Tyler-Lloyd

Councillor(s)

M Durke
E T Kirchner
G J Tanner

Also Present: L S Gibbard

Officer(s)

Allison Lowe
Tracey Meredith
Huw Evans

Democratic Services Officer
Chief Legal Officer / Monitoring Officer
Head of Democratic Services

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): S M Jones

Councillor W G Lewis (Vice Chair) Presided

19 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City & County of Swansea, the following interests were declared:

Councillors J E Burtonshaw, N J Davies, M Durke, L S Gibbard, L James, M Jones, E T Kirchner, W G Lewis, B J Rowlands, G J Tanner, Linda J Tyler-Lloyd and L V Walton declared a personal interest in Minute 21 "Councillors ICT Allowances Policy – May 2022 & Beyond" and Minute 25 "Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Draft Annual Report 2022-2023 – Consultation"

20 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Special Democratic Services Committee held on 27 September 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record subject to Councillor Louise Gibbard being marked as present.

21 Councillors ICT Allowances Policy - May 2022 & Beyond.

The Head of Democratic Services and the Chief Transformation Officer presented a report to review the "Councillors ICT Allowances Policy – May 2017 and Beyond" and recommend a May 2022 & Beyond version to Council. This would ensure that Councillors & Statutory Co-opted Members received ICT provision suited to their needs and was compliant with the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW).

It was recommended that the item be referred to a Group comprising the Political Group Leaders and other Councillors (identified by the Group Leaders), relevant ICT Officers and the Head of Democratic Services prior to it being re-presented to the Democratic Services Committee.

The Head of Democratic Services stated that as a result, his report scheduled for Council in December would be delayed to 27 January 2022 and he would seek to call an additional Democratic Services Committee in December / early January.

Resolved that the item be referred to a Group comprising the Political Group Leaders and other Councillors (identified by the Group Leaders), relevant ICT Officers and the Head of Democratic Services prior to it being re-presented to the Democratic Services Committee.

22 Diversity in Democracy Action Plan.

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report to set out an Action Plan setting out how the Council can support the Diversity in Democracy Programme. To recommend the Diversity in Democracy Action Plan to Council for adoption.

The following issues were raised and amendments suggested:

- Diversity Champions be amended to Diversity Spokesperson or Diversity Lead to avoid confusion with the Diversity Member Champion;
- Reference be made to all the protected characteristics in the Equality Act to show the breadth of underrepresented groups;
- Try to avoid using too much jargon and acronyms when working with the wider community;
- All Councillors had a responsibility, not just Political Leaders.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that the Action Plan set out the actions to be taken by the Authority. When dealing with the wider community, the language used would be more suited to the target audience.

Resolved that the Diversity in Democracy Action Plan be supported and recommended to Council for adoption subject to the above points (where appropriate) being incorporated into the Action Plan.

Councillor L James (Chair) Presided

23 Draft Multi-Location Meetings Policy.

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report to consider the Draft Multi-Location Meetings Policy.

He explained that this would be an evolving Policy which would be regularly updated due to experience and knowledge gained. The Policy would also be shared with the Corporate Management Team and Political Group Leaders in order to formulate it further prior to it eventually being presented to Council.

Resolved that:

- 1) Etiquette at remote meeting guidance be re-circulated regularly to Councillors;
- 2) Councillors forward any other comments in relation to the Policy to the Head of Democratic Services or Monitoring Officer.

24 Councillor Safety & Support.

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report to provide support to all Councillors in discharging their role by agreeing in principal to the council funding appropriate security measures where councillors are at personal risk or significant threat.

He also explained that work was ongoing in respect of removing Councillors home addresses from their published Declaration of Interests and addresses from candidate information prior to the Local Government Election 2022.

Resolved that the Democratic Services Committee:

- 1) Recommends to Council that where a Councillor is at personal risk or significant threat of harm in carrying out their role that consideration is given to funding appropriate security measures.
- 2) Recommends to Council that authority is delegated to the Head of Democratic Services and the Chief Finance Officer to consider and Determine any requests for such funding;
- 3) Information on Councillor Safety be re-circulated to Councillors by email;
- 4) A training event on Councillor Safety be included in the Councillor Induction & Training Programme.

25 Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Draft Annual Report 2022-2023 - Consultation.

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report to consult and comment on the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Draft Annual Report 2022-2023. The comments of the Democratic Services Committee would lead to a Council report proposing a formal reply to the IRPW.

He explained that whilst the consultation period closed on 26 November 2021; the IRPW had given Swansea Council a week's extension until 3 December 2021. The final IRPW report would be published in February 2022.

The Committee discussed the negative feedback that some Councillors had experienced in relation to claims for mileage expenses and ICT allowances that were published on the Council's website. They acknowledged however, that they were entitled to claim these allowances and should be setting an example to support the "Diversity in Democracy" report in order to remove barriers for potential candidates.

Resolved that the Democratic Services Committee:

- 1) Noted the IRPW draft Annual Report 2022-2023 proposals;
- 2) Include a comment in the response to the IRPW regarding the publication of Councillor Expenses and ICT Allowances and its subsequent impact on Diversity in Democracy;
- 3) Recommends the amended consultation response to Council on 2 December 2021.

26 Workplan 2021-2022.

The Chair presented the Work Plan for 2021-2022.

- 1) An additional Meeting be scheduled in December 2021 / January 2022 to re-consider the Councillors ICT Allowances Policy – May 2022 & Beyond;
- 2) The Work Plan be amended to be as follows:

31 January 2022

Councillor Handbook.

The meeting ended at 5.41 pm

Chair