

Minutes



Democratic Services Committee

Date: 24 November 2016

Time: 9.30 am

Present: Councillors C Ferris (Chair), T Bond, M Evans, C Evans, M Linton, J Mudd, K Thomas and T Watkins

Apologies: None

1 **Welsh Agenda**

2 **Apologies for Absence**

None received.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

4 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2016 were confirmed as a true record.

5 **Independent Remuneration Panel Draft Report**

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) is the body tasked with setting the remuneration levels for Councils in Wales. Each year, they publish a Draft Annual Report which is circulated for comment.

In accordance with the requirements of Section 147 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (“the Measure”), the Panel’s draft Annual Report, including proposals which would have effect for the municipal year 2017-2018 is available on its website. The consultation will run until 28 November 2016 with the final IRPW report being published in February 2017.

The Democratic Services Committee gave consideration to the report which set out the determinations by the Panel. There were some 51 determinations although 44 to 51 related to Community/Town Councils. The main issues for the Committee were:

- **Determination 1: Basic Salaries** – a ‘very modest increase of 0.75% to the basic salary’ for councillors. This is the first increase for 3 years and ‘follows the slight easing of restraint in the pay of public sector employees’. It represents a £100 increase in the Basic salary for councillors (to £13,400)
- **Determination 2: Senior Salaries** – No increase is proposed for senior salaries

- **Determination 3: Sickness Absence for Senior Salary Holders** – this is proposed in response to feedback from members and authorities. The approach will operate in a similar way to the current ‘family absence’ provisions. This proposal was broadly welcomed by WLGAs members. The Committee had previously agreed that the current arrangements relating to dispensation for absence beyond 6 months worked adequately without such provision.
- **Determination 43: Care Allowances** – The IRP has been concerned for a number of years about the low take up of this allowance. The IRP is proposing to rename ‘Care Allowances’ as ‘Reimbursement of costs of care’ to try to separate it from being perceived as part of an individual councillors’ salary or allowances.

The IRP also proposed changing the way such payments are published by allowing councils to either:

- Publish the details of the amounts reimbursed to named members; or
- The total amount reimbursed by the authority during the year but not attributed to any named member.

Regarding determinations 1 and 2 the Committee agreed that they needed to distance themselves from matters relating to salaries for members and it should be handed solely by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Committee had no comment to add to those previously made to the IRP on the determinations apart from the following which provoked discussion:

Determination 8: The Panel has determined to include a provision for specific or additional senior salaries that do not fall within the current Remuneration Framework.

This appeared to imply that the Council could apply for extra senior salaries above the Authority’s cap of 18 but no more than 25, although these senior salary positions would not be part of the Executive which was capped at 10. The determination inferred that any application would need IRP approval. The Committee agreed that further clarification was needed on this.

Determination 43: All authorities must provide for the reimbursement of necessary costs for the care of dependent children and adults (provided by informal or formal carers) and for personal assistance needs up to a maximum of £403 per month. Reimbursement shall only be made on production of receipts from the carer.

Several points were raised:

- Publication of names of those receiving reimbursement would be open and transparent.
- Naming those members being reimbursed for these costs would open up their personal circumstances to the public.
- New members needed to be aware of the availability of this reimbursement of care costs.
- It was confirmed that this was not an allowance but a reimbursement of costs for which a receipt had to be supplied.
- As with all reimbursement of costs it would be open to scrutiny.
- In other jobs there is the offer of flexibility of circumstances which is not open to elected members.
- It was confirmed that the take-up of reimbursement of care costs had gone down in recent years.

There were differing views from members and it was agreed this would be reflected in the response.

In addition the Committee agreed following:

- no comment be made on determination 1
- reiterating the comments previously made by the Committee on determinations 2 & 3
- asking for further clarification on determination 8.
- the committee's comment be noted on determination 43.

Agreed:

The Head of Democratic Services to reply to the Independent Remuneration Panel and supply copies to the Committee members.

6 Date of Next Meeting

16 February 2017 at 9.30am

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