
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE 22/03/16

Present: Councillor Tom Ellis (Chair)

Councillors: Annwen Daniels, Anwen Davies, Lesley Day, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Sian Gwenllian, Annwen Hughes, Anne Lloyd Jones, Charles W. Jones, Dilwyn Morgan and Michael Sol Owen.

Officers: Geraint Owen (Head of Democratic Services), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager - Democracy and Delivery), Vera Jones (Democratic Services Manager), Bryn Goodman Jones (Information Technology Support Service Team Leader), Gwyn Jones (Team Leader - Networks, Servers, Applications and Safety) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apology: Councillor Jason Humphreys

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any of the members present.

2. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the last meeting of this committee, held on 24 November 2015, as a true record

3. HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

Submitted – a draft of the annual report to be submitted to the Full Council on 12 May 2016, providing an update regarding the support that was available to members, the developments that had been realised and those that were in progress.

Observations arising from the discussion:-

- That the area forums as a whole were of value as a medium for members to receive information and express opinion on various matters but officers needed to limit the length of their presentations.
- Needed more training for members on Modern.gov. In response, the Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery noted that consideration was being given to holding support sessions, before or after the area forums, to go through the difficulties.
- Needed to draw the Information Technology Service's attention to the problem with band width in the Council's meeting rooms, especially during lunchtime.
- That the chairs of meetings that were held via video-conference tended to focus on what was happening in Caernarfon, disregarding the people at the other locations. It was suggested that it should be the vice-chair's role to keep an eye on the discussion.
- Remote Access could be of use to local members, applicants / objectors who wished to address the Planning Committee. The Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery noted that there were constitutional considerations involved in that, but he could look into the matter.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

The Chairman asked everyone to stay after the end of the meeting to have a conversation with the officers regarding:-

- Rheadr, and how to improve it;
- The training programme for the coming year and an opportunity to see how e-learning was developing

4. 2017 LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS

Submitted – an update of the work of the Diversity Sub-group along with an outline of the preparatory work for the Local Authority Election in 2017:-

- Awareness raising sessions for potential candidates;
- Induction Programme for Elected Members following May 2017 elections;
- Electronic equipment

Observations arising from the discussion:-

- The importance of developing awareness raising sessions for those who put their names forward to stand for election in 2017.
- The political parties should be encouraged to consider using mentoring systems by pairing a new councillor with a more experienced councillor.

The committee was asked to identify 4-5 members who would be willing for the service to consult with them as work progressed with preparing for the awareness raising sessions, identifying the induction programme and the training programme along with electronic considerations.

RESOLVED to establish a focus group, made up of Councillors Annwen Daniels, Selwyn Griffiths, Jason Humphreys, Michael Sol Owen, along with a cabinet member, to check the above matters as the developments progress.

5. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Submitted – an update on the following information technology matters:-

- Tablet training;
- Receiving councillorxx@gwynedd.gov.uk e-mail on mobile devices;
- Preparing for the 2017 elections.

The Senior Manager - Democracy and Delivery explained:-

- Confirmation had now been received that it was possible to offer a service where officers and elected members could receive / send official Council e-mail on their mobile phones, on condition that this was done safely, adhering to the conditions agreed upon with the auditors.
- The cost of the software per device would be £40 in the first year and £10 per year thereafter.

RESOLVED that any councillor who so wishes, should be offered a service enabling them to send/receive councillorxx@gwynedd.gov.uk e-mail on a mobile phone and that the Council will cover the cost and make it clear to the members what the conditions attached to the provision are.

6. FINANCIAL REMUNERATION FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Submitted – the report of the Senior Manager - Democracy and Delivery seeking the committee's opinion on options regarding financial remuneration for elected members.

The Senior Manager - Democracy and Delivery explained that the Independent Remuneration Panel's final proposals for the next year noted that every individual council would decide:-

- To set Cabinet Members on one of two levels, Level 1, £29,000 (as at present) or Level 2 (£26,000);
- To set Committee Chairs on one of two levels, Level 1, £22,000 (as at present) or Level 2 (£20,000).

The committee was also asked to consider if there was a difference in the responsibilities shouldered by the committee chairs who received special remuneration at present, namely the Scrutiny Committees (x3), Audit Committee, Planning Committee, Licensing Committee and the Employment Appeals Committee, and the chairs of some of the other committees, which did not receive special remuneration, such as the Pensions Committee, the Language Committee and this committee.

The Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery noted that the Head of Finance Department had drawn attention to the fact that there had been a substantial increase in the Pensions Committee Chair's work as a result of the establishment of the Pensions Board (which held the Pensions Committee to account). Also, over time, there would be some more work happening in the pensions field on a regional level.

The Head of Democratic Services noted that the Employment Appeals Committee's workload had decreased during the last few months and the number of appeals would be likely to decrease further in the future as more of the work would be done by officers and the trade unions.

The Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery further explained that a cap was set on the number of chairs who could receive special remuneration, and by adding one chair to the list, another would need to be removed.

Observations arising from the discussion:-

- The Cabinet members' duties had been allocated to ensure consistency and a balanced workload and putting Cabinet members on different pay levels could lead to some complexity, meaning that shifting duties from one Cabinet member to another would become more difficult.
- The geographical nature of the county and the challenge of providing services across the second largest county in Wales was a factor that should be considered for the Cabinet members and the committee chairs.
- Members were required to travel across Gwynedd, bearing in mind that it could take approximately two hours to travel from the North of the county to the South.
- As it appeared that the workload of some chairs was larger than others, a small group should be established to look into this further.
- Needed to see if using some elements of the job evaluation procedure would be helpful for this further work.
- The importance of considering elements other than the number of meetings, e.g. the length of meetings and demands outside the meetings.

RESOLVED

- (a) To recommend to the Council that the salary levels of Cabinet Members should remain at Level 1 (based on consideration of the workload and equal responsibilities in the work fields) and the salary levels of Committee Chairs should remain at Level 1 (based on consideration of the workload, the geographical nature of the county and the requirement to attend meetings, etc.).**
- (b) Establish a small group made up of the Chair of this committee, and Councillors Charles Wyn Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones and Dilwyn Morgan to re-examine the responsibilities attached to different chairmanships, and reporting their recommendation to the Full Council via the Business Group.**

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm and concluded at 3.15pm.

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CHAIRMAN