

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
WORKING GROUP - CHAIR AND CIVIC ROLES HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM B -
COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON MONDAY, 19 FEBRUARY
2018**

PRESENT: County Councillor M J Dorrance (Chair)
County Councillors G Breeze, L V Corfield, E M Jones and R Williams

1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
-----------	------------------------------

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors J. Charlton and A. Jenner.

2.	REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF CHAIR OF COUNCIL AND CIVIC ROLES
-----------	---

Documents Considered:

- Role Description for Chair, Vice-Chair and Assistant Vice-Chair of Council.
- Role Description for Chair and Vice-Chair of Shire Committees.
- Types of Activities undertaken by the Chair of Council.
- Extract of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 regarding a Presiding Member.
- Extract of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Report 2018-19 regarding the payment of Senior and Civic Salaries.
- Information from Previous / Current Chairs of Council:
 - County Councillor T.J. Van-Rees
 - County Councillor D. Price.
 - County Councillor D. Davies
- Information from other Councils in Wales:
 - Blaenau Gwent
 - Ceredigion
 - Flintshire
 - Pembrokeshire
 - IDeA – Local Leadership Academy – Joining the Chain Gang
 - WLGA – Welsh Local Leadership Academy – Chairing Skills (Councillor Workbook)

Issues Discussed:

- Difficult to move away from the current position of Chair – someone has to preside over a Council meeting.
- The Shire Chairs posts which are ending in May – these posts are civic roles bridging a link with the community. It was therefore important that the bridges with the community be retained.
- Role of a Presiding Member was described, but it was felt that there was no benefit in moving to such a post as the civic role would still need to be undertaken. Whilst the civic role could be undertaken by others, this being undertaken by a Chair was felt to be of greater benefit to the Council.
- There is an issue in relation to Senior Salaries. In the IRPW report whilst the payments to Chair and Vice-Chair of Council are defined as a Civic Salary, the Presiding Member salary has to be counted within the cap of 18 Senior salaries that the Council is allowed. Currently all 18 Senior Salaries are allocated by the Council and if a Presiding Member were to be appointed another current Senior Salary holder would have to lose their Senior Salary.

- Whilst the Presiding Member post is paid a senior salary, the post of Deputy Presiding Member does not attract a senior salary under the IRPW regulations. Currently the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council are paid a Civic Salary. Changing from Chair and Vice-Chair to Presiding Member and Deputy is only an insignificant saving (i.e. £2700 per annum)
- As the posts of Shire Chairs are ending in May, the roles of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Assistant Vice-Chair of Council will become more important as they will absorb the Shire Chair post roles.
- The rotation of Chair of Council between the 3 areas was discussed and it was considered that as this provided representation across the whole of the county, and in order to take on the Shire Chair roles as indicated above, the rotation should be retained. This cycle also provided more Members with an opportunity to undertake a senior role within the Council and it was seen as a means of career development for Members.
- The Chair of Council had a budget allocated by the Council to spend at their discretion (currently £10,000 which had been reduced to this level by a previous budget reduction). This should be retained.
- In relation to civic salaries, there were 3 levels of payment allowed by the IRPW regulations. Currently the Council paid at the middle band (Level 2). There was a scope to reduce this to Level 3. However the saving would only be £4500 per annum.
- The role of Chair develops links between authorities. It was suggested that comparative information be requested from other authorities as to the budget allocated for their Chair of Council and what facilities and support were provided for their Chair.
- It was considered that these links with other authorities had assisted Powys in the past particularly in the provision of a “floor” when the budget settlement was being considered across Wales, which reduced the severity of budget reductions. This “floor” would not have been possible without the co-operation of other Councils in Wales.
- The group considered that its role was not to consider the Chair’s car but the civic roles. However it was considered that to undertake the role the Chair should be provided with the appropriate level of support and facilities which included such items as a vehicle.
- It was considered that the civic role of Chair and the activities undertaken were valued. The group also thanked the current and previous Chair for their feedback.

Conclusions:

- **The civic roles are valued and should be retained.**
- **The roles of Chair, Vice-Chair and Assistant Vice-Chair will be more important now as they absorb the Shire Chair roles as from May.**
- **The current rotation for Chair of Council between areas be retained.**
- **There is no benefit in moving to a Presiding Member in place of a Chair of Council.**
- **There is limited scope for reducing the level of civic salary paid but it does not provide significant savings.**
- **The current budget allocation for the Chair’s use should be retained but the level could be reviewed.**
- **The Chair’s role needs to be appropriately supported and resourced.**

County Councillor M.J. Dorrance

This page is intentionally left blank