

RHONDDA CYNON TAFF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014-2015

**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
COMMITTEE
5TH NOVEMBER, 2014**

Agenda Item No. 5(b)

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**2015/16 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF
THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION
PANEL FOR WALES**

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek the Committee's views in relation to Determination 6 (paragraphs 3.21 – 3.23) of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report for 2015/16 regarding supporting the work of local authority elected members.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- (i) Members consider and comment on the draft 2015/16 Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales relating to determination 6 – supporting the work of local authority members (paragraphs 3.21 – 3.23)
- (ii) That if felt appropriate, the response of the Democratic Services Committee be forwarded to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales before the deadline of the 27th November, 2014.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales ("the Panel") was established in 2008 and comprises five members appointed by the Minister for Local Government. The link to the Panel's Draft Annual Report for 2015/16 was emailed to all Members during the month of September of this year.
- 3.2 The full report of the Panel has not been appended to this report due to its volume and given that the response of this Committee can only relate to the section relating to - supporting the work of local authority elected members as shown below. However, this does not prevent any Member making

individual comments to any other part of the document by the response deadline of the 27th November, 2014.

- 3.3 The seventh (2015/16) Annual Report can be accessed by using the link www.remunerationpanel.wales.org.uk
- 3.4 The Committee's comments are therefore sought in relation to paragraphs 3.21-3.23 in order that a response can be made by the 27th November, 2014:

Supporting the work of local authority elected members

3.21 *The Panel remains concerned that there has been wide variation and inconsistency of support provided to members. Some authorities made a flat rate payment; some provided IT equipment and consumables, some provided funded telephones/mobiles and/or tablets. Others made little or no provision and in at least one instance a deduction was made from basic salary. Insufficient support potentially undermines the ability of members to discharge their functions effectively.*

3.22 *The Panel expects that the support provided should take account of the specific needs of individual members. It falls within the functions of Democratic Services Committees to review the level of support provided to members to carry out their duties and the Panel would expect these committees to do so and bring forward proposals to the full council as to what is considered to be reasonable.*

3.23 *The Panel has requested to give additional guidance in relation to the level of basic IT provision or members of principal authorities. The Panel is of the view that it is necessary for each elected member to have ready use of telephone, e-mail services and electronic access to appropriate information via an internet connection. This comprises the necessary provision for a member to be in proper contact with council services and to maintain contact with those they represent. Many councils in Wales are committed to 'paperless working' and without electronic access a member would be significantly limited in his or her ability to discharge their duties. As indicated above it is the responsibility of each council to base its level of provision on an assessment of the needs of its members. It would not be appropriate for such facilities only to be available within council offices within office hours. When specific training, additional needs or matters of disability apply each authority will need to assess any specific requirements of individual members.*

Determination 6: The Panel has determined that each authority, through its Democratic Services Committee, must ensure that all its members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. All elected members should be provided with adequate telephone and email facilities and electronic access to appropriate information.

- 3.5 As an aside, to the information contained in the afore-mentioned paragraphs, what may be of interest to Members is that the Panel has decided that no increase in remuneration be made for 2015/16 given the continuing constraints on local government spending. However, a questionnaire survey is to be undertaken during 2015 of all elected members in order that the Panel can be satisfied that the current remuneration framework continues to be relevant and appropriate.

