

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD AT BY ZOOM ON FRIDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2023

### PRESENT

County Councillor E Vaughan (Chair)

County Councillors D Bebb, A Davies, I Harrison, P Lewington, P E Lewis and  
S L Williams

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors L Brighthouse, K Healy, H Hulme and DW Meredith and County Councillor G Breeze who was on other Council business.

#### 2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2023 as a correct record.

#### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

The Public Participation Strategy was taken next.

#### 4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

The Committee considered the Public Participation Strategy which had been updated following a 12-week public consultation. The Committee welcomed the opportunities for the public to engage with the Authority.

#### **RESOLVED**

**that the Powys Public Participation Strategy be approved for publication and distribution through our main communication channels.**

#### 5. PROPOSAL FOR REVISIONS TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND NUMBERS OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES

The Committee considered the report on the proposals for the revisions to the scrutiny committee structure and number of seats on committees.

The Committee noted the various reasons for the proposed changes and the discussions which had taken place, as detailed in the report.

**Pensions and Investment Committee, Governance and Audit Committee and Finance Panel.**

It was moved and duly seconded to recommend to Full Council that no changes should be made to the Pensions and Investment Committee, Governance and Audit Committee and Finance Panel.

<b>RECOMMENDATION to Full Council:</b>	<b>Reason for Recommendation:</b>
<p><b>That there is no change to the following committees:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pensions and Investment Committee</b></li> <li>• <b>Governance and Audit Committee</b></li> <li>• <b>Finance Panel.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>To respond to the request by political group leaders to review the numbers of seats on committees following the reduction in the numbers of Members in May 2022.</b></p>

### **Scrutiny Committees**

The Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer advised that Group Leaders had agreed that the number of seats on scrutiny committees should be 11 or 12. However, he advised that the Conservative Group Leader had advised that he does not accept that he had agreed to such changes.

The following comments were made:

- The level of scrutiny should not change because some members have outside employment and a member's work on the Council should not come second to this. In response, officers advised that it was important that the Council should reflect the population and the diversity agenda sought to attract people from all walks of life to become members.
- Although the largest group has vacancies on committees, a large number of its members are on the Cabinet and so ineligible to serve on committees and so the number of members available to sit on committees is reduced.
- The active involvement and engagement of members on committees is more important than the numbers on committees and the quality of scrutiny was important.
- There are sometimes clashes with other council meetings or work in wards.
- The work level of non-aligned members should be considered. In response, the Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer advised that groups had offered vacant seats to non-aligned members after the annual meeting in May 2022, but this needs to be actively promoted.
- The workload for each committee varies considerably.
- Online meetings now make it easier for members to attend meetings and then do other work in their wards, rather than having to travel to meetings.
- Attendance details at committee meetings was not available.

It was moved and duly seconded to recommend to Full Council that the numbers of seats on all three scrutiny committees should be reduced to 11 Members, plus the addition of co-opted Members where required.

<b>RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL:</b>	<b>REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:</b>
<p><b>(i) that the numbers of seats on all three scrutiny committees should be reduced to 11 Members, plus the addition of co-opted Members where required</b></p>	<p><b>To respond to the request by political group leaders to review the numbers of seats on committees following the reduction in the numbers of Members in May 2022.</b></p>

(ii) <b>that the Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer prepare revisions to Section 7 of the Constitution for consideration by the Council to reflect the above.</b>	
--	--

### **Democratic Services Committee, Employment and Appeals Committee and Licensing Act 2003 Committee**

The Committee was advised that the Chairs of these Committees considered the number of seats should not fall below 12. Comment was made that the number of seats should be the same as scrutiny committees.

It was moved and duly seconded to recommend to Full Council that the numbers of seats on the Democratic Services Committee, Employment and Appeals Committee and Licensing Act 2003 Committee should be reduced to 11 Members.

<b>RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL:</b>	<b>REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:</b>
(i) <b>that the numbers of seats on the Democratic Services Committee, Employment and Appeals Committee and Licensing Act 2003 Committee should be reduced to 11 Members</b>  (ii) <b>that the Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer prepare revisions to Section 9 of the Constitution for consideration by the Council to reflect the above.</b>	<b>To respond to the request by political group leaders to review the numbers of seats on committees following the reduction in the numbers of Members in May 2022.</b>

Councillor S Williams left the meeting.

### **Planning, Taxi Licensing and Rights of Way Committee**

In response to a question regarding the current 21 seats on the committee, the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer advised that this was historical. The following comments were made:

- the reasons for members not being able to attend meetings should be established before the number of seats are reduced
- reducing the number of seats on committees would make it easier to fill vacancies.
- from the public point of view Planning is more visible. Reducing the number of seats would make the council's activities more remote and maintaining a wider representation was important.

The Committee noted that the Planning Committee Chair's preference was that the number of seats should not change.

It was moved and duly seconded to recommend to Full Council to reduce the number of seats on the Planning, Taxi Licensing and Rights of Way Committee be reduced to 17 members. On the Chair's casting vote the following was agreed.

<b>RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL:</b>	<b>REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:</b>
<p>(i) that the numbers of seats on the Planning, Taxi Licensing and Rights of Way Committee be reduced to 17 Members.</p> <p>(ii) that the Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer prepare revisions to Section 9 of the Constitution for consideration by the Council to reflect the above.</p>	<p>To respond to the request by political group leaders to review the numbers of seats on committees following the reduction in the numbers of Members in May 2022.</p>

### **Remit of the scrutiny committees**

The Committee considered the proposed changes to the remit of the scrutiny committees, with the scrutiny of corporate services being shared across all three committees rather than the one currently. It was noted that the current chair of the Health and Care Scrutiny preferred there to be no change, but other chairs supported the proposals. Comment was made that some Childrens services interconnect with Adult Services and so it was important to ensure that such links are scrutinised.

It was moved and duly seconded to recommend to Full Council to change the scrutiny committees as follows and there to be no change for the Finance Panel:

<b>RECOMMENDATION to Council:</b>	<b>Reason for Recommendation:</b>
<p>(i) that the following three scrutiny committees should be established with effect from the AGM in May 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with a remit of: Children's Services, Education; Legal Services</li> <li>• Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee with a remit of: HTR; Property, Planning and Public Protection; Digital and Economy; Finance Service</li> <li>• Adults and Housing Scrutiny</li> </ul>	<p>To respond to the request by political group leaders to review the numbers of seats on committees following the reduction in the numbers of Members in May 2022.</p>

<p><b>Committee with a remit of: Adults Services; Commissioning; Housing; Community Services; Workforce and OD</b></p> <p><b>(ii) That there be no changes to the Finance Panel and</b></p> <p><b>(iii) That the Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer prepare revisions to Section 7 of the Constitution to reflect the above.</b></p>	
---	--

### **Public Service Board [PSB]**

The Committee noted the review of PSBs and that no comments had been received on the proposed changes from the current non councillor members of the PSB.

It was moved and duly seconded to amend the PSB as recommended by officers.

<b>RECOMMENDATION to Council:</b>	<b>Reason for Recommendation:</b>
<p><b>(i) that the membership of the PSB be: 9 members in total made up as follows: Vice-Chairs of the 3 Scrutiny Committees + 2 additional representatives from the scrutiny committees (on a politically balanced basis = Independents (1); Conservatives (1); Liberal Democrats (2) Labour (1), Independents for Powys (1))</b></p> <p><b>(ii) that the remit of the scrutiny committees be amended to consider Towards 2040 and Transformation and Democratic Services</b></p> <p><b>(iii) that the Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer prepare revisions to Section 7 of the Constitution for consideration by the Council to reflect the above.</b></p>	<p><b>To respond to the request by political group leaders to review the numbers of seats on committees following the reduction in the numbers of Members in May 2022.</b></p>

### **Review of Senior Salaries**

The Committee noted the views of the Group Leaders regarding the payment of senior salaries. It was moved and duly seconded to support these views.

<b>RECOMMENDATION to Full Council</b>	<b>Reason for Recommendation:</b>
---------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

<p>(i) <b>the Chair of the PSB Scrutiny Committee should not receive a remuneration in accordance with the IRPW report for consideration by the Council.</b></p> <p>(ii) <b>that the Chair of the Employment Committee should continue to receive a remuneration in accordance with the IRPW report following changes to the terms of reference of the committee.</b></p>	<p><b>To consider consequential changes to the Members' Schedule of Remuneration arising from the change to the Council's scrutiny committee structure and changes to the terms of reference of the Employment Committee.</b></p>
---	---

Councillor A Davies left the meeting.

<b>6.</b>	<b>NEW WAYS OF WORKING</b>
-----------	----------------------------

The Committee considered the report.

Comment was made that committees should have flexibility to determine how they meet, either face to face, online only or hybrid.

**Resolved to:**

- i. continue with the current working arrangements,**
- ii. task Scrutiny Chairs to determine, with their committee, how they would like to work and**
- iii. that each Committee meet at least twice a year face to face.**

It was considered that due to the small number of members remaining in the meeting that a recommendation should be made to Full Council.

It was moved and duly recommended to recommend the New Ways of Working to Full Council.

**Resolved to recommend the New Ways of Working to Full Council.**

**County Councillor E Vaughan (Chair)**