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County Borough Council

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Date Written	16 November 2020
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Service Area	Democratic Services
Committee Date	23 November 2020

*To: Chair, Ladies and
Gentlemen*

CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS COST OF CARE AND PERSONAL ASSISTANCE

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1.1 To promote the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' (IRPW) determination in relation to the Costs of Care and to encourage take up of the reimbursement by presenting this report to Council and drawing up a plan to review compliance with the IRPW Supplementary Report published in May 2020.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

2.1 The report be noted by Members.

2.2 The report be submitted to Council for information.

2.3 The Council's response to the IRPW draft Annual Report for 2021/22 include support for the changes to the Costs of Care.

2.4 The Head of Democratic Services put together a plan to consider the minimum requirements of the IRPW 2020 Supplementary Report relating to costs of care and report back to Democratic Services Committee in January 2021.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

3.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) is tasked with setting the remuneration levels for Councils in Wales.

- 3.2 Since the inception of the IRPW in January 2008, each of its Annual Reports has included a Section relating to Costs of Care, aiming to assist Councillors and Co-opted Members with any caring responsibilities in order to enable them to carry out their Council related duties.
- 3.3 In May 2020 the IRPW produced a supplementary report (Appendix 1) on the principles relating to the costs of care, highlighting the that the level of payment should not act as a barrier to taking up or continuing in a public post and should, in fact, act as an incentive to promoting diversity in democracy.

4.0 DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY

- 4.1 The aim of the Welsh Government's Diversity in Democracy Steering Group is for local authorities to be more representative of their communities through the active encouragement of diverse candidates from a variety of backgrounds to stand in Local Government Elections.
- 4.2 In their May 2020 supplementary report, the IRPW refers to the importance of clarity in the availability of the access to the Costs of Care, setting out minimum requirements for authorities relating to raising awareness and promoting a positive culture.
- 4.3 They emphasise the correlation between the two, highlighting how the provision of costs of care promotes diversity in democracy by enabling those with caring needs to access the additional support required to undertake the role of councillor or co-opted member.

5.0 WHAT ARE COSTS OF CARE?

- 5.1 Local Authorities must provide for the payment of salaries and expenses to councillors and co-opted members in line with the annual reports of the IRPW.
- 5.2 The specific purpose of the costs of care is to assist those potential councillors and co-opted members who have caring responsibilities by providing them with additional support to undertake their duties.
- 5.2 Councillors and co-opted members are currently entitled to reimbursement of their care costs up to the maximum of £403 per month for activities that the individual council has designated official business or an approved duty which might include preparation and travelling time.
- 5.3 In their draft 2021/2022 annual report, the IRPW has considered their supplementary report in May 2020, reviewed the arrangements for financial support toward the costs of care and proposed further changes shown at Appendix 2.

6.0 TAKE UP OF THE COSTS OF CARE

- 6.1 During visits to local authorities, the IRPW found that very few councillors and co-opted members were utilising the Reimbursement of Costs of Care provision. The IRPW believe that many are reluctant to claim because of concerns about adverse publicity.
- 6.2 In response, the IRPW's annual report 2020 changed their requirements on the publication of the costs of care, requiring that relevant authorities should only publish the total amount reimbursed during the year rather than the amounts claimed by each individual.

7.0 ROLE OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

- 7.1 The IRPW has urged each Democratic Services Committee to take steps to encourage and facilitate greater use of the Costs of Care provision so that councillors and co-opted members are not financially disadvantaged.
- 7.2 It is proposed that the Democratic Services Committee and the Head of Democratic Services promote the Costs of Care provision throughout the Authority.
- 7.3 This work should begin with this report being presented to Council for information and a project plan drawn up to consider the minimum requirements in the IRPW supplementary report.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 Providing a councillor or co-opted member meets the requirement to claim for the Reimbursement of Costs of Care, they are currently entitled to a payment not exceeding £403 per month.
- 8.2 The IRPW draft annual report for 2021/2022 is looking to remove this monthly cap but as an authority we have never received a claim so there is no precedent against which to measure the financial implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Draft IRPW Report	2021 / 2022	Democratic Services
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		