

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

MEETING HELD AT THE SOUTHPORT TOWN HALL ON WEDNESDAY 16TH MARCH, 2011

PRESENT: Canon R. Driver (in the Chair)
Mrs S. Lowe

ALSO PRESENT: Ms. V. Swale, Corporate Finance and ICT
Department
Mr. D. McCullough, Interim Head of Corporate Legal
Services
Ms. A. Grant, Assistant Director (Democratic
Services)
Mr. P. Fraser, Chief Executive's Department

6. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Mr. S. Dickson

7. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED:

That Canon R. Driver be appointed Chair of the Panel for this meeting.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

9. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

10. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME

The Panel commenced its review of the Members' Allowance Scheme for 2012/13 and received presentations from Ms. A. Grant, Assistant Director (Democratic Services) and Ms. V. Swale, Insurance and Administration Manager, Finance and Information Services Department.

Ms. Grant detailed the differing roles and work of Councillors i.e. Cabinet Member, Spokespersons, Committee Chair, backbencher, appointees on outside bodies etc; detailed the current Council/Executive/Committee decision making structure; and advised of the findings of the latest national census of Local Authority Councillors undertaken by the Local Government Association in 2008 which indicated that, amongst other things, Councillors spent on average 22 hours per week on Council

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business and that this was consistent with surveys undertaken in both 2004 and 2006.

Ms. Grant concluded by detailing the new governance arrangements approved by Council on 3 March 2011 that replaced Cabinet Member meetings with electronic decision making; that reduced the calendar of meetings by 53%; and that all Key Decisions would be taken by the Cabinet with all other decision making powers delegated to Cabinet Member/Committees.

Ms. Swale detailed the suggested matters for consideration by the Panel in understanding the review; highlighted how a full review would be undertaken; that the recommended effective date of any changes should be 1 April; sought views on the link between the Mayoral Allowance and SRA multipliers although this allowance did not form part of the Scheme; the current linkage for annual increases to be in line with officers pay (SCP33); that pensions were available to all Members under the age of 75; and ancillary points for consideration relating to dependent carers allowance and overnight and day subsistence rates.

Ms. Swale also provided information on the following to aid the Panel on their deliberations on the matter:

- Copy of the current Scheme
- Copy of the Notes for Guidance
- Members ICT - new ICT Policy
- Notes on how the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances were originally established
- A copy of the current National Daily Rate
- Corporate Travel and Accommodation Policy
- Comparative data from 2009/10 (for background). (A further set showing the updated details would be forwarded by June 2011)
- Copy of the Base Budget for 2011/12

Panel Members asked questions and commented on:

- the audit trail of electronic decision making and the call-in process
- the provision of IT equipment for Members
- the 53% reduction in meetings and the commensurate reduction in hours spent on Council business
- the differentials in time spent on Council business between Cabinet Members, Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and backbenchers etc.
- Boundary Commission reviews and the reduction in Members per Ward
- the Budget and Policy Framework of the Council
- portfolio changes to potentially correspond with the new senior management structure
- the potential for certain Cabinet Members to have more responsibilities than others and whether this should be reflected in SRA
- obtaining the best available price for rail travel journeys

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- undertaking the review following the implementation of the new governance arrangements and proposals contained in the Localism Bill
- Government guidance on SRA's
- an assessment of the SRA paid to Party Group Leaders to correspond to the amount of Members within their group
- the payment of SRA to Party Group Leaders who do not hold Cabinet positions
- Mayoral Allowances and the recent appointment of the Deputy Chair rather than Deputy Mayor
- the production of an annual report highlighting the attendance of Members at meetings.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) in order to formulate an objective review of the Members Allowance Scheme for 2012/13, the Assistant Director (Democratic Services) be requested to:
 - (a) provide a copy of the Government guidance on Special Responsibility Allowances to Panel Members;
 - (b) consider options for the payment of Special Responsibility Allowances to Party Group Leaders who do not hold Cabinet positions;
 - (c) seek the views of Party Group Leaders on whether certain Cabinet Member portfolios should attract a higher Special Responsibility Allowance than others due to additional responsibilities resting with various Cabinet Members following the recent senior management restructure; and
 - (d) seek the views of all Members of the Council, in writing, on the Members' Allowance Scheme;
- (2) it be noted that the Mayoral Allowance does not form part of the remit of the Panel but the views of the Mayoral Working Group be sought on whether the opinions of the Panel on such Allowance would be helpful;
- (3) to encourage a culture to make savings, investigations be undertaken to establish a protocol to aid Members in "shopping around" to get the most economic ticket prices for rail journeys;
- (4) Party Group Leaders (or their representatives) be invited to the meeting of the Panel on 7 September 2011; and
- (5) the meeting of the Panel, scheduled to be held at Bootle Town Hall on 7 September 2011, be held at Southport Town Hall instead.