

## **INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

### **MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, SOUTHPORT ON WEDNESDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER, 2011**

**PRESENT:** Cannon Roger Driver (in the Chair)  
Mr. Steve Dickson and Mrs. S. Lowe.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors Moncur, Parry and Robertson  
Ms. A. Grant, Head of Governance and Civic  
Services  
Mrs. J. McMahon, Head of Transformation  
Mr. P. Fraser, Committee Administrator

#### **1. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

#### **2. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

**RESOLVED:**

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

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

#### **4. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

#### **5. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME**

Further to Minute No. 10 of the meeting held on 16 March 2011, the Panel considered the report of the Head of Governance and Civic Services that provided information to aid the Panel in formulating an objective review of the Members' Allowance Scheme for 2012/13.

Attached as an appendix to the report was an extract from the Guidance on Regulation for Local Authority Allowances, published by the Government in July 2003, relating to Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA); and information relating to the following was circulated to the Panel at the meeting:

- the views of Party Leaders on whether certain Cabinet Member portfolios should attract a higher SRA than others due to additional responsibilities;

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- issues relating to the Mayoral Allowance;
- the views of Members on the Members' Allowance Scheme;
- the Council's systems for obtaining the best price for rail journeys;

Mrs. J. McMahon, Head of Transformation, updated the Panel on the Council's current budget position and prioritisation agenda. She advised that the vast majority of approved savings had been achieved; detailed the ongoing major reviews; that the forecast savings target for 2012/13 was £20 million; and that a further £18 million savings were required in the following two years. This equated to 21% of the directly controllable budget of £184m.

Mrs. McMahon also detailed that all the more straightforward options had been taken; that no service area was exempt from efficiency savings; that there would be further service reductions and cessation of services; and that the Council was attempting to take a strategic overview of services to

- build on the approved prioritisation agenda
- find different ways of delivery
- provide greater integration of front line services
- provide greater flexibility in the workforce.

Mrs. McMahon concluded by detailing the big issues associated with the perception and expectations of residents to the changes; that equality impact assessments must be undertaken prior to service reductions/cessation; that the "You Choose" public options would be known by October; the capacity issues for remaining staff; maintaining performance issues and morale amongst staff; maintaining relationships with partners; and that the size of the challenge facing the Council must not be underestimated.

Panel Members asked questions and commented on reductions to the Members' Allowance budget; pay freezes for Council staff; and senior officer restructuring.

The Panel were advised that Members' Basic Allowance had been cut by 5% from 2 September 2010 and 5% cuts to SRA's were made in 2009/10; that senior officers had not had increments for four years and staff did not receive a pay award last year; that management and support costs had been cut by 20% this year and would be cut by 5% next year; and that the Tier 4 management restructure had now commenced.

Mrs. McMahon was thanked for her presentation.

Panel Members then sought the views of the Group Leaders/representative on the review following which the elected Members left the meeting to enable the Panel Members to undertake their deliberations.

RESOLVED: That

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- (1) the Panel wishes to explore the reduction in the number of Members receiving Special Responsibility Allowances from 50% to 40%;
- (2) in connection with (1) above, the Head of Governance and Civic Services be requested to seek the views/options of the Leaders' Group and Members on how this reduction could be achieved;
- (3) it was noted by the Panel that it was obliged to undertake a full review of the Members' Allowance Scheme for implementation in 2012/13 and that to aid them in the review, the Head of Governance and Civic Services be requested to provide information:
  - (i) on reviews being undertaken by Independent Remuneration Panels at other Merseyside Local Authorities to help the Panel focus its deliberations and set benchmarks;
  - (ii) in tabular form showing all Members and the Special Responsibility Allowances they receive;
  - (iii) in chart form showing Cabinet Members and their portfolio responsibilities;
  - (iv) on the attendance of Members at meetings;
  - (v) job descriptions for Members; and
  - (vi) the activities of a selected group of Members over a monthly period that indicates how much time each Member spends on their Council/representative duties;
- (4) a meeting of the Panel be held at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, 29 November 2011 at Bootle Town Hall to consider the information referred to above and to formulate recommendations on the Members' Allowance Scheme for 2012/13; and
- (5) Party Group Leaders (or their representatives) be invited to the meeting on 29 November 2011 and to attend at 10.30 a.m.