

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, BOOTLE ON WEDNESDAY 10TH OCTOBER, 2012

PRESENT: Canon Roger Driver, (in the Chair)
Mr. J. Fraser and Mrs. S. Lowe

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Brodie-Browne and Papworth (in attendance for part of the meeting only)
Andrea Watts, Head of Governance and Civic Services, Margaret Rawding, Head of Corporate Finance and ICT Strategy and Paul Fraser, Senior Democratic Services Officer

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. E. Davies and Councillor P. Dowd.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

11. MINUTES

The Panel considered the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2012.

Andrea Watts, Head of Governance and Civic Services updated the Panel on the decision taken by the Council at its meeting held on 5 July 2012 concerning the Members' Allowance Scheme. The recommendation by the Panel, resulting in a saving of £76,000, was noted by the Council and an amended scheme was introduced that resulted in a saving of £148,000. A copy of the approved scheme was circulated to Panel Members.

RESOLVED:

That subject to Minute No. 7 (Members' Allowance Scheme 2012-13) being amended to reflect the fact that all Members of the Council had been invited to submit their comments on the Members' Allowance Scheme, the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

12. PRESENTATION ON THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION

The Panel received a presentation from Margaret Rawding, Head of Corporate Finance and ICT Strategy on the Council's financial position.

Mrs. Rawding indicated that the Transformation Programme 2012 – 15 report considered by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 13 September provided details of a package of potential savings options which could be progressed in order to move towards the achievement of a balanced

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budget in 2013/14 and 2014/15; and that the extent of the options reflected the significant challenge of identifying a further £43.7 million of savings.

Mrs. Rawding highlighted the following points:

- £43.7 million savings had to be achieved from a budget of £240 million. This savings figure was based on the Council's current understanding but factors such as the Chancellor's statement in December may change this figure
- £11 million savings had been approved and that if all options contained in the report to the Cabinet on 11 October 2012, were accepted, then a budget gap of £17 million would remain
- the identified savings in the Cabinet report would have an impact on Council services and impact assessments would be taken on the options
- a reduction in the amount of Early Intervention Grant the Council would receive
- the top slicing of other Central Government grants
- schools opting for Academy status and the impact this had on the Council's finances
- the Council Tax Reduction Scheme that would commence on 1 April, 2013. Government grants to the Council would be 13% less than under the previous Council Tax benefit scheme resulting in residents having to make payments totalling £4 million. The scheme was currently being consulted upon and it was hoped that mechanisms could be used to reduce by £1 million the costs that would be passed on to residents
- the Council Tax freeze announcement made on 8 October 2012
- changes made to the Business Rates system

RESOLVED:

That Margaret Rawding be thanked for her informative presentation.

13. INDEX LINKING OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

Further to Minute No. 7 (2) of the meeting held on 6 June 2012, the Panel considered the principle of index linking increases in Members' Basic Allowances (BA).

Following deliberations on the proposals, Councillors Brodie-Browne and Papworth (the Liberal Democrat and Conservative Group Leaders respectively) attended the meeting and made verbal representations to the Panel on the Members' Allowance Scheme. The views of Councillor P. Dowd, who was not present at the meeting, were also relayed to Panel Members. Following their submissions, Councillors Brodie-Browne and Papworth left the room to enable the Panel Members to formulate their recommendations.

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RESOLVED: That

- (1) in view of the short/medium term uncertainty of public sector finances, the index linking of increases in Members' Basic Allowances be not approved;
- (2) a further meeting of the Panel be held at 11.00 am on Wednesday, 12 December 2012 at Bootle Town Hall to formulate recommendations for submission to the Council on the Members' Allowance Scheme for 2013/14;
- (3) to aid the Panel in the formulation of its recommendations, a report be submitted to the meeting on 12 December detailing relevant inflationary changes;
- (4) all Members of the Council be invited to submit their written comments to the Head of Governance and Civic Services on the level of the Basic Allowance and the relativity of the Bands relating to Special Responsibility Allowances; and
- (5) all written submissions made by Members be included in the report to the Panel.