

Time start: 2.00 pm
Time finished: 4.11 pm

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL 4 JULY 2003

Present: Reverend Canon R B Blowers (in the Chair)
Mr G Bagga
Mr M Jinks
Michael Foote
Steve Dunning

01/03 Appointment of Chair

Resolved to appoint Canon R B Blowers as Chair of the meeting.

02/03 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Burgess, Mrs C McDowall and Mr R Tapping.

03/03 Late Items

There were no late items.

04/03 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2002 were agreed as a correct record.

05/03 Report of the Secretary

The Panel considered a report of the Secretary, requesting that the Panel consider amendments to the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme in light of The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003 which:

- make changes to the existing regime for travel and subsistence allowances;
- introduce a co-optees' allowance;
- allow authorities to cease payment to members who have been suspended or partially suspended from their duties;

- allow authorities to backdate allowances to the beginning of the financial year in which they are paid, and to make annual adjustments by means of an index, subject to the recommendations of their independent remuneration panel; indexing must be reviewed every four years;
- make provision for independent remuneration panels to make binding decisions on which councillors may be eligible for pensions.

Under regulations, the Council, before amending its Members Allowance Scheme, must have regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Leaders of the three political groups or their representative were invited to the meeting to give the Panel their views on the issues under consideration. Councillors Care, P Hickson and Williamson attended and addressed the Panel.

The Panel noted that on 21 May 2003, there was a change in political control of the Council from the Labour Group to an alliance of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups. There was a reduction in the number of members on the Council Cabinet from ten to eight and a consequent change in the portfolios of Council Cabinet members. The 2002/03 portfolios were set out in Appendix 1 and the 2003/04 portfolios were given in Appendix 2.

Councillor Williamson presented the Panel with a written submission in which he recommended that the Basic Allowance should be increased to reflect the increase in workload and public expectations of elected members. Councillors Care and P Hickson did not recommend that the Basic Allowance should be increased.

The Panel considered two further issues relating to Special Responsibility Allowances. These were:

- whether there should be a Special Responsibility Allowance allocated to the Mayor.
- whether to make any recommendations concerning the Special Responsibility Allowance paid to members of the Licensing and Appeals Committee.

The Panel considered these submissions and the statutory Guidance on Members' Allowances.

Resolved to recommend Council:

- 1 to confirm the Basic Allowance at £8,613.68 a year.**
- 2 to confirm the current list of Special Responsibility Allowances subject to:**
 - the withdrawal of the now unnecessary equalisation process for Council Cabinet Members other than the Leader or the Deputy Leader.**
 - the fixing of the allowance for all Council Cabinet members, other than the Leader and Deputy Leader, at 50% of the Leader's allowance**
 - the inclusion of an allowance for the Mayor equal to that paid to the chair of a regulatory committee.**
- 3 to continue the current practice whereby, with the exception of the Special Responsibility Allowance payable as a member of the Licensing and Appeals Committee, no councillor shall receive more than one Special Responsibility Allowance. Where a councillor is entitled to receive more than one such allowance, s/he shall receive the higher or highest allowance.**
- 4 to reduce the 'Mayor's Purse' to £2,000 a year and to agree that any annual index applied to Members' Allowances should also apply to the 'Mayor's Purse'.**
- 5 to increase the maximum limit for the Dependent Carer's Allowance to £40 a day.**
- 6 for Travelling and Subsistence Allowances:**
 - a to continue applying the scale previously approved by the Secretary of State, subject to the inclusion of a cycling allowance of 15p a mile.**
 - b to approve the list of approved duties set out in Appendix 4 to the Panel's report.**
- 7 not to include a Co-optees Allowance in its Members' Allowances Scheme at this stage, and to ask the Independent Remuneration Panel to review this allowance when considering its recommendations for 2004/05.**
- 8 to agree that all councillors be entitled to pensions, and that both the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances be treated as amounts in respect of which pensions are payable.**

- 9 to agree that, allowances be backdated to 1 May 2003 in accordance with the 2003 Regulations.**
- 10 to agree that no provision for indexing be included in the 2003/04 Members' Allowances Scheme, and to ask the Panel to review the matter when considering its recommendations for 2004/05.**

06/03 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved that the next meeting of the Panel would be held in either February or March 2004.

MINUTES END