

**ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

**Minutes of a Meeting held on Wednesday 22 October 2008 at 10.00 am  
in the Conference Room, Borough Offices, Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds**

PRESENT: Dr A D Lower (Chairman), Mr R R Hansen,  
Dr J R Hill and Mr A L Jary

**1. Election of Chairman**

Resolved:-

That Dr A D Lower be elected as Chairman.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

**3. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4. Representation from the Members' Allowances Panel**

The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) considered Report Z306 (previously circulated) which contained recommendations from the Members' Allowances Panel.

Following the distribution of the papers, a request had been received from the IRP that minutes of the meetings of the Members' Allowances Panel be presented at this meeting and these were tabled.

On 11 December 2007, the Council resolved to set up a politically balanced group of five Members to consider the Members' Allowances Scheme and make representations to the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Members' Allowances Panel had reviewed by the following allowances:-

- (1) Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA);
- (2) Members' Basic Allowance;
- (3) the link between the Members' Basic Allowance and the annual cost of living pay award paid to employees of the Council; and
- (4) long-term sickness/absence arrangements for Members.

The IRP considered each representation in turn.

The IRP was informed that subsequent to this report the Service Delivery Review Panel had been disbanded, and that the workload of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee was not as previously envisaged. Indeed two of the last three Committee meetings had been cancelled, therefore, the IRP saw merit in not awarding a SRA to these postholders. The Panel also concurred with the representation of the Members' Allowance Panel and that no allowance should be made to the Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill Area Working Parties as responsibilities for both Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill were included within the remit of relevant Portfolio Holders.

When considering the representation regarding payment to Group Leaders, the IRP would have liked to have seen a closer definition of 'clear opposition to the majority party'. However, the IRP noted that the representation included a reference that this postholder should be remunerated at a rate similar to that of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committees, which was a conclusion it had previously reached for payment of Group Leaders with ten or more members. From representations previously received the IRP could not justify recommending a change to the current allowance scheme.

The Panel noted the representation to increase the SRA payments to the Leader, Deputy Leader and Members of the Cabinet and wished to see evidence to support this proposal. It was agreed that the IRP would read the minutes of the Members' Allowances Panel to ascertain what evidence had been received.

The IRP was informed that since the report had been written the membership of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee had been increased from seven to ten members by full Council on 23 September 2008. The rationale being that 'ten heads were better than seven'. The IRP also noted that the changes proposed for the SRA's for Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees was to reflect the workload currently undertaken by these Members. Having received information in determining these allowances from the Scrutiny Manager the IRP also wished to see what evidence had been used to base the assumptions within this report.

The IRP recognised that the proposals concerning the indexation of the Members' Basis Allowance was inconsistent in that for the current financial year, 2008/2009, it was based on the increase in Council Tax and for the following financial year the recommendation related to the Retail Price Index. The IRP considered that the current system, whereby indexation was the same for both staff and Members, was not divisive and also was a 'simple' method, which all parties could easily understand. The IRP was informed that for the 2008/2009 financial year it had recently been announced that staff would receive a 2.45% pay increase as an interim measure back dated to 1 April 2008 and this would be paid in November 2008. Further negotiations between the employers' and employees' side were continuing to finalise the pay award. In accordance with the Council's resolution, this award would also be applied to the Members' Allowance Scheme.

The IRP saw some merit in the proposal to make an adjustment to the payment of Members' Basic Allowances in the event of long term sickness. However, the IRP considered that it would not be equitable to continue to pay a SRA during long term sickness as the role and the responsibility associated with this allowance would be undertaken by another Member. Therefore, it was considered more appropriate that once the role and responsibility was assigned to another Member the allowance should be transferred forthwith. With regard to the Basic Allowance it was concluded that this should be paid in full for the first six months of absence, at 50% of the rate for the following six months and then after a period of one year it should cease. The IRP recognised that the basic allowance was the subject to a public service discount.

In considering the agenda for the next meeting the IRP wished to consider the contents of the minutes of the Members' Allowance Panel to see what evidence had been collected by that body before determining what evidence it wished to see. However it was considered appropriate that Councillor Farmer, Chairman of the Members' Allowances Panel, be invited to attend the next meeting.

**14. Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 19 November 2008 at 10.00 am.

The meeting concluded at 11.32 am.

**DR A D LOWER  
CHAIRMAN**