

Report Of The

**Kirklees Council
Members'
Allowances Independent
Review Panel**

8th November 2011

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1. Panel Membership

The members of the Independent Review Panel are as follows:

Andrew Taylor (Chair)
Ian Brown
Chris West
Lynn Knowles
Stephen Thornton
Fiona Weston

The meeting of the Panel took place on Tuesday 8 November 2011.

The following officers attended the panel meeting:

Carl Whistlecraft, Head of Governance and Democratic Services
Deborah Nicholson, Councillor Support Team Leader, Legal, Governance and Monitoring
David Gordon, Governance Officer, Legal, Governance and Monitoring

2. Terms of Reference

The Panel's terms of reference are:

- a. To advise Council on what would be the appropriate level of remuneration for councillors having regard to the:
 - Roles councillors are expected to fulfil.
 - Varying roles of different councillors.
 - Practice elsewhere and other local authorities.
- b. To consider schemes of Members' Allowances for Town and Parish Councils as and when required.
- c. To make recommendations and provide advice to the council on any other issues referred to the Panel by regulation or by the council.
- d. Council retains its power to remove a discredited Panel member.
- e. The Panel can appoint its Chair from amongst its members.

3. Re-election of Independent Review Panel Members

Andrew Taylor and Stephen Thornton were both re-elected as Panel Members for a further one year term.

4. Election of Chair of Independent Review Panel

Andrew Taylor was re-elected Chair of the Independent Review Panel.

5. Terms of Office of Panel Members

The Panel noted that Terms of Office ended as follows:

Ian Brown - March 2012
Lynn Knowles - September 2013
Chris West - September 2013
Fiona Weston - September 2013

It was also noted that from 2012, Panel Members would be appointed for a one year term.

6. Standards Committee and the Localism Bill

By way of context the Panel received an update on the potential implications for the Allowances Scheme arising from the Localism Bill which was soon to become an Act. Of particular note was the abolition of the Standards Board which would require the Panel to reconsider certain parts of the scheme relating to this particular area of activity.

It was acknowledged that the Panel was not in a position to consider issues in respect of the future role of the Standards Committee and the Members' Allowances Scheme, until such a time as the detail was clearer and work had taken place by officers in Kirklees.

7. Members' Allowances Scheme 2012/13

The Panel considered any changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2012/13. Having regard to the difficult economic climate, **the Panel recommends that no changes be made to the allowances and rates currently contained in the Scheme, subject to the following minor changes:-**

a. Travel and Subsistence

Car mileage and daytime subsistence payable for approved duties, as set out in Regulation 8(1) of the 2003 Regulations.

The Panel recommends that such duties outside the district should continue to be paid at HMRC rates, which are 45p per mile for the first 10,000 business miles in the tax year and then 25p per mile thereafter.

If the HMRC rates are increased, then the Panel recommends that the new rates apply and be paid accordingly.

b. Dependants' Carers' Allowance

Provision for payment of dependants' carers' allowance in respect of such expenses as arranging for the care of their children or dependants as are necessarily incurred in carrying out duties set out in Regulation 7(1) of the 2003 Regulations.

The Panel recommends that the rate of Dependants' Carers' Allowance from 1 April 2012 is that of the National Minimum Wage for age 21 and above, which was increased from £5.93 to £6.08 an hour in October 2011.

The Panel also recommends that the Dependants' Carers' Allowance should also apply and be paid for attendance at any Induction Training/Events etc, which is not currently included as an approved duty in the Allowances Scheme.

8. Telephony and Information Technology Support for Councillors

The Panel had previously recommended that a full review of the Telephony and Information Technology Support for Councillors be carried out, which should specifically focus on how such technology could be used as a means of improving the effectiveness of Councillors and delivering value for money for the Council and its residents. The Head of Governance and Democratic Services agreed to draw up some Terms of Reference to be used as a basis for further work with the Panel. Such work to involve Officers from the Council's IT Service and the Web Development/Strategy Team.