

Kirklees Metropolitan Council

report of

**The Independent Review Panel on
Members' Allowances**

19 November 2004

Kirklees Metropolitan Council

Report of the Independent Review Panel on Members Allowances

The panel met to give further consideration to various issues arising from the meeting held on 15 April 2004.

The panel

Membership of the panel which met on 19 November 2004 is as follows:

Dr Andrew Taylor (Chair of the Panel), Department of Politics, The University of Sheffield

Mr Christopher Dicks OBE, former Managing Director of Huddersfield Newspapers and past President of Mid-Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce

Mr Stephen Thornton, Managing Director, Advance Wipers Ltd, Dewsbury

The following officers attended the panel meeting:

Carl Whistlecraft	- Corporate Development Unit
Julie Fothergill	- Corporate Development Unit
Vanda White	- Members Allowances Co-ordinator
John Quarmby	- Decision Support Unit

(a) Representations from group business managers

The panel invited group business managers to report on arrangements for monitoring time sheets and arrangements to ensure members are offered the opportunity and are undertaking the relevant development.

The following members attended for this item:

Councillor Mehboob Khan, Leader of the Labour Group for Councillor Eric Firth, Group Business Manager who was attending a conference.

Councillor Andrew Marchington, Deputy Business Manager, Liberal Democrat Group for Councillor Paul Battye, Group Business Manager who was attending a conference.

Councillor Julie Stewart Turner, Group Business Manager, the Green Party.

The panel was advised that all members were completing timesheets, as recommended by the panel, and that a majority of members completed an electronic version of the appropriate form. The timesheet recorded the following details:

- The number of hours spent in council meetings, committees, panels and meetings of outside bodies.
- The number of hours spent in ward surgeries or equivalent meetings or

activities.

- The number of hours spent on individual constituents issues/problems pursued.
- The number of hours spent in response to service consultations on local issues.
- The number of hours spent in training sessions.
- The number of hours spent on reading, research and preparing for meetings.
- The number of hours spent in community meetings and local events.
- Travel time/travel costs.

The timesheets were seen by the group business managers of the appropriate party group who monitored members performance on the hours spent on council work as detailed above.

The party groups had taken on board the panel's suggestion for mentoring of "new" members. There was no set formula although one party allocated a specific member to mentor a "new" member whereas another party had arranged for a "new" member to form links with an experienced member of an adjoining ward.

With reference to member development, two new initiatives had been adopted during the current year. On the day of full council meetings, policy development sessions were organised to which all members were invited and attendance levels had been high. At these sessions members received a short initial briefing on the subject matter and then went into workshops for further discussions. These sessions went on for 1 ½ hours. Selection of the topics for discussion was agreed by the Council Business Committee and a rolling programme had been agreed.

Cabinet had agreed to set up three new cabinet committees in addition to the existing cabinet committees.

Each committee had provision for up to nine non-executive councillors, nominated by the group business managers, to attend meetings. Prior to the commencement of each formal meeting an agenda free session of one hour duration was held at which any member or non-executive member could raise issues of strategic importance for discussion.

Group meetings had been used for member development whereby new initiatives, policy changes etc. were considered with briefings by officers.

Groups also arranged "training" days for their members.

Induction training for new members had been restructured.

The overview and scrutiny function had arranged briefings for "new" members on a one to one basis.

The group business managers had discussed the changing roles of members' responsibilities and had commissioned the Corporate Development Unit to take a fresh look at all the role profiles on which the panel had based its recommendations for the payment of special responsibility allowances. The findings of the review, expected to be completed by April/May 2005 would be reported to the panel.

The role profile for a ward councillor, on which the basic allowance had been based, would be reviewed, particularly that part of the profile which referred to the role of a councillor as a "community leader".

The group business managers were also discussing proposed arrangements for "succession planning" for a number of roles but specifically for cabinet members. More details would be available to the review panel when next they met.

The chair thanked members for attending the meeting.

The panel was pleased to note the new developments in training provision for members.

(b) West Yorkshire Pension Fund - Investment Panel

(Councillor Hemingway, the council's nominee on the above Pension Fund attended the meeting together with Michael Butler, Head of Democratic Support Service)

The panel considered a report by Michael Butler which provided background information as to the time commitment of a member of the above investment panel.

The panel was asked to consider whether or not a special responsibility allowance should be attached to that position as was the case for members serving on the South Yorkshire Pension Authority. Any allowance determined would be payable by the council as information received advised that the pension fund had no authority to pay a special responsibility allowance.

The panel discussed with Councillor Hemingway the time commitment and the knowledge required to undertake this role.

The panel concluded that further information was required before any recommendation might be made as to the payment of an allowance.

Agreed -

(1) That Bradford Council who administers the West Yorkshire Pension Scheme be requested to provide a role profile of what is expected of a member of the investment panel; and

(2) That the chief executive be requested to raise the issue of the payment of a special responsibility allowance for this position with the Association of West Yorkshire Authority's in order to gain their opinion on the introduction of such a payment across those authorities.

(c) Travel and subsistence allowances (outside the district)

The panel undertook a review of the existing travel allowances and daytime subsistence rates payable for approved duties only outside the district.

The panel recommended (1) that rates for car mileage, be increased in line with the increase in officer rates backdated to 1 April 2004.

And, (2) that for all subsequent years this allowance together with any adjustment to the day-time subsistence rates agreed by the Council be implemented without further recourse to the panel.

(Motor cycle rates, the bicycle allowance, and the overnight subsistence which are not subject to national agreement to remain as recommended by the panel on 17 September 2003)

(d) Index linking of the basic allowance special responsibility allowances and the carers' allowance

The panel was asked to consider whether or not to set an index for annual adjustment of the basic allowance, the special responsibility allowances and the carers allowance.

Having considered this matter the panel recommend that the basic allowance and the special responsibility allowances be increased by 2.75% backdated to 1 April 2004. The Carers' Allowance of £5 per hour to remain at that level. (No claims had been made for this allowance at the date of the panel meeting)

The panel was not minded to recommend the index linking of the basic and special responsibility allowances for subsequent years as they wish to consider the performance of members as set out in the various role profiles before determining, on an annual basis whether to recommend a percentage increase.

(e) Pensions for councillors

The panel considered an update report which provided pension take-up figures by members and the costs to the council following a recommendation by the panel that the Local Government Pension Scheme should be made available to all members of the council on a contributory basis on the basic allowance only with effect from 17 September 2003.

The panel noted the report and requested further information for their next meeting on the likely costs to the council should the panel recommend that the special responsibility allowances should be pensionable for the purposes of the scheme.

(f) Parish allowances

The panel received an update report on parish allowances. The relevant regulations allowed panels to make recommendations regarding the payment of a parish basic allowance and parish travel and subsistence allowances. Following information received for the five parishes in Kirklees the panel recommended that no action be taken on the payment of the parish allowances. The panel noted variations in existing travel and subsistence rates and requested that parishes look to standardise these allowances.

The report advised that Mirfield Parish rarely made travel or subsistence payments but would adopt a rate agreed by other parishes.

Denby Dale and Holme Valley parishes had amended their travel rates to the Inland Revenue authorised mileage rates. Meltham and Kirkburton already paid Inland Revenue authorised mileage rates.

The panel noted the report and the action taken by the parishes.

(g) Co-optees on panels

The panel considered an update report in response to an earlier decision not to recommend the payment of a co-optees allowance. The panel noted information supplied on the number of meetings convened during 2002, 2003 and 2004 for meetings of school admission appeal panels together with correspondence received from a former member of such a panel.

The panel agreed to seek further information on whether or not the council supported, in general terms, the payment of a co-optees allowance to members of the schools admission and exclusion panels and to co-optees of the Standards Committee, and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for Education and Young People.

The panel also wish to see a role profile for co-opted members of school admission and school exclusion appeals.

(h) Licensing panel

(Kevin Kendall, Head of Building Control and Licensing and Michael Butler, Head of Democratic Support Services attended the meeting for this item)

The panel received a presentation from Mr Kendal and Mr Butler about how the council proposed to deal with the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003 including arrangements for consideration of liquor licensing and late night refreshment houses.

Under arrangements agreed by the council's Licensing and Safety Committee, a number of licensing panels would be established consisting of three members of the committee who would exercise all licensing functions under the Licensing Act 2003 including determination and dealing with applications for licences, certificates, temporary events and other notices and all variations, transfers, withdrawals and review of such matters. The expected increase in the number of licences to be administered and regulated under the new legislation will require the panels to meet frequently to determine those matters. Three members of the Licensing and Safety Committee would be nominated to chair the meetings of the panels and all members of the Licensing and Safety Committee may be called upon to attend a panel meeting. All members of that committee would receive training on the licensing policy.

In anticipation of the heavy workload of those panels, the panel was asked to consider whether or not a special responsibility allowance should be awarded to the panel chair and whether or not any payment should be made to members of the panels.

The panel agreed to recommend that as a temporary measure and in order to meet the demands likely to fall on the panels, that the chairs of these panels should receive a special responsibility allowance of up to half a day per week (£950.44) and that each member of the panel should receive £36.55 per day split into half day sessions (2 x 4 hours) to commence at the start of formal meetings to their conclusion. The "daily rate"

to be paid to a panel member irrespective of whether that member is in receipt of a SRA. The recommendation should not be taken as a precedence for any future proposals and will cover the period February 2005 to March 2006, when the panel will review their decision based on the anticipated workload after that date.

The special responsibility allowance and the daily payment to be dependent upon the member having undergone the necessary training.

The special responsibility allowance payable to the chair of the Licensing and Safety Committee to remain at the current level of up to one day per week (£1900.88).

(i) Allowances for chairs of ad-hoc scrutiny panels

The panel had at its August 2003 meeting recommended that the chair of ad-hoc scrutiny panels should receive a daily allowance (subject to conditions) in recognition of the detailed work undertaken.

The panel was advised that to-date, the allowance had not been taken up as the ad hocs had been chaired by members already in receipt of a special responsibilities allowance.

Panel membership

The former member of the panel, Mrs Christine Woods had recently retired and moved out of the Kirklees district. The panel wish to place on record their thanks for the valued contribution which Christine has made at panel meetings since inception in August 1999.

The panel agreed to fill the resultant vacancy with suggestions being discussed between the chief executive and the panel chair.

Dr Andrew Taylor
Chair of the Independent Review Panel