

Concise Minutes - Remuneration Board

Meeting Venue:

Meeting date: Thursday, 13 October 2022

Conference Room C - Tŷ Hywel

Meeting time: Times Not Specified

IRB(05-22)

Attendance

Category	Names
Board members:	Dr Elizabeth Haywood (Chair) Rt Hon Sir David Hanson Michael Redhouse Dame Jane Roberts Hugh Widdis
Secretariat:	Martha Da Gama Howells, Second Clerk; Ruth Hatton, Deputy Clerk; Angharad Coupar, Deputy Clerk; (virtual via MS Teams) Anna Daniel, Senior Adviser to the Board; Craig Griffiths, Legal Adviser to the Board; (virtual via MS Teams) Bethan Davies, Head of Member Support and Engagement; Martin Jennings, Research Team Leader, Financial Scrutiny Unit; Kate Rabaiotti, Legal Services
Participants:	Ed Williams, Director of Senedd Resources; James Attridge, Senior Security Manager; Joanna Adams, Head of Member Liaison
Observers:	Gareth Watts, Head of Governance and Assurance; Huw Bowen, Members Business Support

1 Chair's introduction (9.00 - 9.05)

- The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. No apologies had been received.
- David Lakin, Committee Support Officer, was not in attendance due to a family bereavement and the Board conveyed their best wishes to David.
- The Board congratulated Joanna Adams on her recent promotion and thanked her for her valued work in supporting the Board.
- The Board welcomed Martha Da Gama Howells and Angharad Coupar to the Clerking Team.
- The Board discussed an Exceptional Expenses claim received from a Member and decided to approve the claim subject to consultation with the Commission's Accounting Officer, as is required by the Determination.
- The Board reflected on their visits to political group offices conducted the previous day and agreed it had provided a useful insight into how the groups operate and use the funding provided to them by the Determination to support Members' parliamentary duties.
- Reflecting on ongoing issues for the Board it was agreed that an update on Members' tax liabilities would be sought and discussed at the Board's meeting in December.
- The minutes of the 7 July meeting were agreed.

Action:

- The Secretariat to write to Chief Executive to consult on the Exceptional Expenses claim.
- Include tax liability on the agenda for the December meeting.
- Publish minutes of the 7 July meeting

2 Item for discussion: Senedd reform (9.05 - 9.20)

- The Board reflected on their meetings held on the previous day with Party Leaders. The Chair informed the Board that she will be meeting with the Llywydd in late October to discuss Senedd Reform.
- The Board agreed to seek a meeting with the First Minister, at his convenience, to discuss Senedd reform.

Action:

- The Secretariat to contact the First Minister's Office to arrange a meeting.

3 Item for decision: Co-operation Agreement (9.20 - 9.45)

- The Board considered all of the evidence received on the implications of the Agreement on Members' pay and allowances, including letters received recently from political groups.
- The Board considered the range of views expressed by groups on issues including the division of the Support for Political Parties allowance. The Board again noted the legal advice that Plaid Cymru are not a party in government.
- The Board decided that no changes to allowances are justified in light of the Cooperation Agreement.
- In response to a specific question raised by Plaid Cymru the Board agreed that Members are able to claim reimbursement for expenses incurred as Designated Members but noted that the Determination does not allow for reimbursement of costs incurred as a result of party political activity. The Board acknowledged that the distinction between parliamentary activity and party political activity is not always clear and that Members must use their best judgement on such when making claims for costs incurred. Examples of activity that constitutes party political activity are set out in Rule 1 of the [Accounting Officer's Rules and Guidance on the Use of Senedd Resources](#).

Action:

- Secretariat to draft letter to Plaid Cymru Group re. Designated Members claiming expenses.

4 Item for discussion: Security update (9.45 - 10.30)

- The Board received an update by the Commission's Security Team on Members' security arrangements.
- The Board were pleased to note the progress in assessing Members' requirements and providing for such, and thanked the team for their update.
- It was noted that the Commission is considering the continuation and evolution of the current project to assess Members' security requirements. The Board is supportive of its continuation to meet Members' needs.

5 Item for decision: Cost of living/ Energy costs (10.45 - 11.45)

- The Board considered detailed evidence on the costs of living in Wales, the current economic situation, the impact of inflationary pressures on Members' business costs and the response by the UK and Welsh Governments and other public bodies to the cost of living crisis. The Board decided to keep the situation under review and receive a further update at their December meeting. The evidence provided in December will

help to inform their decision regarding any changes the Board wishes to make to the Determination.

Action:

- The Board to review the evolving situation in the December meeting.

6 Item for decision: Thematic Review - Ways of working (11.45 - 12.30)

- The Board considered issues of immediate priority in terms of the support needed by Members and their staff in order to facilitate home or hybrid working, including the home working allowance, and the equipping of home offices.
- Health and Safety – The Board agreed to review the provisions in the Determination which relate to Health and Safety, to make them clearer and simpler. They agreed this review would be led by Hugh Widdis, with support from officials.
- Home working allowance – The Board agreed to consider as part of the Annual Review the provision in the Determination for the home working allowance, which was established in response to Covid-19.
- Covid-19 Return to Office Allowance – The Board agreed to close this fund from the end of November and to issue a notice alerting them to the fact that this allowance will be closed for any new claims from the end of November.

7 Item for decision: Thematic Review - Members' staffing support (13.15 - 14.00)

- The Board noted the feedback received on the draft terms of reference for the review, which was shared with Representative Groups and the Chief Executive and Clerk during the summer recess.
- The Board agreed the terms of reference for the review.
- As part of the first phase of the review, and in light of calls for greater staffing support for Members, the Board considered representations made on this issue by Members over the course of this year and changes to the volume and complexity of Members' workload. The Board acknowledged that the complexity of Members' parliamentary work has increased.
- The Board agreed to consider this further as part of the annual review of the Determination for 2023/24.

8 Item for decision: Initial consideration of Annual Review of Determination (14.00 - 14.45)

- The Board agreed on the scope of the annual review for 2023/24 and its approach to the publication of the consultation.

- The Board agreed to consult for six weeks (publishing in early January) on proposed changes to the Determination for 2023/24, with a view to publishing a revised Determination by 1 April 2023.
- In respect of the index-linked annual adjustment to the salaries of Members and support staff the Board noted that ASHE figures will be published on 3 November.
- In light of HMRC guidance that the £25 Members are able to claim for staying with friends or family while on Senedd business should no longer be paid, the Board agreed to consult as part of the annual review on ending this provision.
- In light of comments by Members on the sufficiency of the allowance available for staying overnight in a hotel in London, the Board decided to consider this issue as part of the annual review.

9 Item for discussion: Update and Forward Work Programme (14.45 - 15.00)

- The Board were updated on recruitment to new posts within the Board's Clerking Team.
- To ensure value for money the Board agreed that work to address the known typographical and language issues in the Members' Pension Scheme rules will be postponed until a more substantive review of the scheme rules is required.
- The Board noted an update on development of the Senedd Commission's Electric Vehicle Salary Sacrifice Scheme.
- The Board agreed that the 8 December meeting would be held virtually.