

Remuneration Board

Meeting Venue: **Conference Room 4B – Tŷ Hywel**

Meeting date: **Friday, 21 June 2013**

Meeting time: **09.30 – 16.00**

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Concise Minutes:

Assembly Members:

Sir George Reid (Chair)
Sandy Blair CBE
Mary Carter
Stuart Castledine
Monojit Chatterji

Witnesses:

John Chick, National Assembly for Wales
Adrian Crompton, Director of Assembly Business
Anna Daniel, Clerk of the Business Committee
Elisabeth Jones, Director of Legal Services
Dominic Houlihan

Committee Staff:

Carys Evans (Secretary)
Al Davies (Secretary)

1 Chair's introduction

1. The Chair welcomed the Board to its Nineteenth meeting and extended a welcome to Anna Daniel, recently appointed as the Assembly's Head of Strategic Transformation Service who's Team would in due course assume responsibility for secretariat support to the Board.

2. Minutes of the previous 22 March meeting were reviewed and confirmed as a correct record.
3. There were no declarations of interest.

2 Annual review of the Determination

4. Following its meeting of 22 March, the Chair of the Board had written to all Members outlining the proposed changes to the Determination arising from the consultation undertaken earlier in the year.
5. The Board considered feedback received from Members before finalising the proposed amendments to the Determination for the current financial year. The following decisions were agreed by the Board:

Office Cost Allowance

6. Increasing, for 2013–14, the office cost allowance to £16,697 in line with the OBR's Forecast Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 2.8% for 2013

Accommodation allowance – essential repairs

7. Allowing within the accommodation allowance, for Members within the transitional arrangements, payments for essential repairs. These would be subject to pre-approval by the MBS and capped at £840 (10% of the total accommodation budget)

Necessary security precautions for properties that are not the Member's main home.

8. Approval of reasonable claims for costs of additional security precautions for properties that are not the Member's main home deemed necessary to minimise security risks. Any payments would be subject to the Member's submission of written advice from the police confirming the necessity of such precautions and, where the cost is £750 or more, a minimum of three competitive quotes for the required work and equipment.

Travel outside the European Union

9. Amending the Determination to allow travel outside the EU, as part of Member's existing entitlement of up to four return journeys in any financial year. Approval of such visits would be subject to appropriate safeguards, including submissions of business cases to present the value and merits to the Member and the

Assembly from the proposed visit, and an undertaking to draft a post-visit report to be posted on the Assembly's website.

Consideration of exceptional payments.

10. The Board discussed this matter and the practicalities involved to ensure that a speedy decision could be reached whilst ensuring that safeguards in place protect individual identities and confidentiality.
11. The Board decided that it would revisit and further consider the issue at its next meeting in October.

Support for Members with caring responsibilities

12. The Board agreed to proceed with a detailed consultation with Members following the summer recess to inform its consideration as to whether to introduce an allowance for Members with caring responsibilities along similar lines to arrangements currently in place in the House of Commons and the Northern Ireland Assembly.
13. These decisions would be recorded in the Board's Annual Report for 2012-13.
14. The Board agreed that a general refresh of the wording of the Determination would be undertaken as part of the review in preparation for the Fifth Assembly.

3 Standards Committee

15. The Board considered two reports which the Assembly's Standards of Conduct Committee had brought to its attention.
 - i) Report under Standing Order 22.9
16. The Board noted the Standard Committee's recommendations pertaining to an investigation of a complaint against an Assembly Member, which was undertaken by the Commissioner for Standards, under SO 22.9
17. The Board would write to the Committee Chair, Mick Antoniw AM to confirm that it was content that the present safeguards were sufficiently robust.
 - ii) Report on Lobbying and Cross-Party Groups
18. The Board discussed the Committee's findings of its inquiry into the Assembly's arrangements for lobbying activity and Cross-Party Groups, and considered

whether there were implications for the operation of the Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances.

19. The Board agreed with the thrust of the Committee's position on the use of allowances for participation in Cross-Party Groups and for greater clarity regarding this matter, recognising them as a mechanism for engaging with interest groups from a range of sectors that can play a valuable role in raising awareness of issues.
20. As such, participation in such groups was considered, in principle, an appropriate Assembly activity and allowances payable through the Determination could be used to facilitate participation in a formal activity of the group. Members would need to take personal responsibility for all expenses incurred and exercise judgment in assessing the relevance of any activity being carried out to their duties as Assembly Members.
21. The Board applauded the Committee's aim to make Assembly CPGs fit for Welsh models and to make them more accountable in nature and would ensure that there be clarity regarding this matter and issue guidance if necessary in its revised Determination.
22. The Board's Chair would write to the Committee Chair as a priority to convey the Board's views on the matter so that this might inform the discussion in advance of the planned Assembly debate on Lobbying and CPG to be held on 26 June.

4 Pensions

23. The Board discussed the Review of AM pensions, and acknowledged that it would, no doubt in part be guided by the IPSA consultation in Westminster which was expected later in the month.
24. Board Members discussed the implication of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 for its consideration of future pension arrangements for Assembly Members.
25. The Board considered the processes and timings which the Review would entail and the preliminary work it would need to undertake. As an initial course of action, the Board undertook to:
 - i) Update the Assembly's Pensions Trustees on the Board's proposed plans and discuss the likely cost of the required legal advice and contingencies to be made. It would also discuss the suggestion of the use of the

Government procurement scheme in possible conjunction with a tender exercise.

- ii) Write to the Treasury to set out its initial intentions for the Review and clarify matters relating to Treasury approval for any new scheme should they decide to take this route.
- iii) Undertake procurement exercised to appoint actuarial and legal advisers over the summer recess with a view to them attending the next Board meeting in the Autumn. This would include liaising with the Trustees about the extent to which the Board might be able to work with the Government Actuary's Department, who were the adviser to the Trustees of the current scheme.

5 Review of AM staffing

26. The Chair gave a brief overview of the process to date as part of the Board's review into AM Staffing and noted that he and Sandy Blair had participated in a final round of meetings with stakeholders in May.
27. A summary of the Board's decisions on AM Staffing is detailed below with the following measures having taken effect on 1 April 2013
 - One per cent pay rise for all Assembly Members' Support Staff (AMSS)
 - The opportunity for new starters appointed at the bottom point of their pay scale to be eligible for a pay review after six months. Subject to satisfactory performance, they would then progress to the next incremental point on the pay scale. Their future pay progression would be on the anniversary of the six month review
 - Removing the requirement that positions must be externally advertised in those instances where there are suitable internal candidates who have previously been appointed through fair and open competition.
 - Permitting Assembly Members to increase the number of annual leave days for those staff on standard contracts up to 31 days per annum.
28. The Chair also confirmed the Board's decisions regarding arrangements it had sought to set out aimed at enhancing the strategic capacity of the Assembly, of individual Members and of party groups; whilst also providing additional career development opportunities for support staff.

29. The Board acknowledged that whilst some Members had welcomed its proposals and agreed with the principles upon which they were based, they had not received support across the board.
30. The Board therefore agreed that these proposals would not implement as a package. Rather, some of these changes – where there had been overwhelming agreement–would be implemented from 1 July 2013 and monitored over the next 12 months.
31. A summary of these proposals is detailed below:

Enhanced support for individual Assembly Members appointment of a Senior Advisor

32. The Board confirmed that it did not intend to proceed with this proposal for the current financial year but may return to it in the future.

Enhanced support for individual Assembly Members – Engagement Fund (Policy and Research Fund)

33. The Board agreed to proceed with the proposal of making an additional fund available to Members so that it could be used for commissioning external research with effect from 1 July. To clarify its purpose it would be named the Policy and Research Fund. It would be available to Members to fund external research to support policy development, exploration of issues of significance in their constituency or region, or the scrutiny of policy, legislation or finance.
34. Members would be permitted to combine these funds to commission larger pieces of work, although this would need to be in accordance with best procurement practice.
35. The Board would monitor take up of the Policy and Research Fund and its value in bringing in additional expertise to assist Members over the next 12 months. It would initially review the operation of the new fund at the end of the current financial year.

Enhanced support for Groups – new pay band for Chiefs of Staff

36. The Board agreed the introduction of a new pay band for Chiefs of Staff which would be remunerated at 10 % higher than the Additional Group Support salary. This was in recognition of what the Board saw as greater responsibility carried

over other positions within the groups and in providing strategic support to the Party Leaders, Business Managers and all group Members. Only one full time post or equivalent per party group would be funded in this way.

Enhanced support for Groups – enhanced capacity within party groups

37. The Board agreed enhancing the budget for each party group to enable them to strengthen their policy and research capacity and enable them to appoint staff at a more senior level to undertake complex work.
38. Groups would still retain the flexibility to structure group offices according to their needs. Officials from the Members Business Support (MBS) Team would discuss this in detail with the groups and provide appropriate advice.
39. The Chair stressed that the Board remained committed to promoting AMSS career progression and enhancing the Assembly's strategic capacity and that the remaining proposals would be left on the table for further consideration in 2014.
40. The Board confirmed that the maximum potential cost of the proposals it had agreed will be £200k for a full financial year.
41. The Chair would now write to Assembly Members and AMSS to inform them of the Board's final decision regarding AM Staffing.
42. These decisions would be outlined in greater detail in the Board's Annual Report for 2012–13, which would be published before the summer recess.

6 Forward work programme

43. The Board noted a draft of the Board's future work programme for consideration.
44. The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the outgoing Clerk, Carys Eyton Evans, for her outstanding support and service to him and the Board over the past two years, and wished her well for the future.

The Board's next meeting was confirmed for 18 October 2013.

Board Secretariat

July 2013