

Concise Minutes – Remuneration Board

Meeting Venue:

Meeting date: Thursday, 28 January
2016

Meeting time: 10.00 – 16.00

Attendance

Category	Names
Assembly Members:	Rt Hon Dame Dawn Primarolo (Chair) Trevor Reaney Michael Redhouse Dame Jane Roberts Roger Williams
Witnesses:	John Chick, Head of Members' Business Support, National Assembly for Wales Adrian Crompton, Director of Assembly Business Anna Daniel, Head of Strategic Transformation Matthew Richards Donna Davies, Head of Pensions Rebecca Hardwicke, Members' HR Business Partner Martin Jennings
Committee Staff:	Gwion Evans (Clerk) Daniel Collier (Deputy Clerk)



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

1 Chair's introduction

1.1 The Chair welcomed Gwion Evans who had been appointed the new Clerk of the Remuneration Board.

1.2 The Board discussed the procedure for Board members declaring interests at each meeting. It was agreed that, in addition to any general interests of potential relevance to the Board's work previously declared and registered, members should declare particular interests when relevant to specific items on the agenda.

1.3 The Chair provided feedback from the Assembly Member Representative group and Assembly Member Support Staff (AMSS) Representative Group meetings and the drop-in session held during Plenary on 27 January.

1.4 Subject to minor amendments, the Board agreed the minutes of the meeting on 10 December 2015.

2 Consideration of the Board's work programme and reflections on induction

2.1 The Board considered a paper outlining the work scheduled to be undertaken and forthcoming key decision required. The Board considered the work plan for the spring/summer term 2016 along with the development of a medium to long term strategic work programme.

2.2 The Chair invited Board members to report on their work shadowing experiences with AMs and AMSS.

2.3 The Head of Communications at the Assembly Commission facilitated a discussion on recent media coverage of the previous Board's determination.

Action point:

- The Board agreed to write to the AMSS representative group stating that, in line with the decision of the previous Board, reimbursement of activity relating to political party conference would not be allowed.

Pensions

- 2.4 The Board noted that the recruitment process for the appointment of an independent Chair of the new Pension Board for the National Assembly for Wales Member Pension Scheme had begun and that the sifting of applications would take place in February. The Board noted that interviews would take place in March with the aim of appointing a successful candidate by the beginning of the Fifth Assembly.
- 2.5 The Board noted that the final meeting of the Board of Trustees for the current Assembly Member Pension Scheme would take place on 1st February 2016. The Board agreed to write to the Board of Trustees thanking them for their diligent stewardship in managing the existing pension scheme and supporting the development of the new scheme rules.
- 2.6 The Board received an update on preparations for the new Assembly Member pension scheme. The Board had received correspondence from the UK Government Actuary's Department (GAD) inviting it and the Trustees to consider options for the Assembly Commission's contribution to the new pension scheme before the contribution level is confirmed. Board members agreed to examine the options available further before making a decision to inform GAD of how it wishes to see the Scheme funded, by 29 February 2016.
- 2.7 The Board received a briefing on AMSS Pensions contributions. This outlined the Wales Audit Office had identified that due to an administrative arrangement the current Commission contributions to the AMSS pension scheme are marginally above the 10% stated in the Determination. The Board agreed that this was a technical issue involving relatively small amounts and that it was content for the

arrangement to continue. It was agreed that the Pensions Team would inform the Wales Audit Office accordingly.

Meeting dates

2.8 The Board confirmed the following dates:

- Thursday 24 March
- Tuesday 5 July (afternoon) and Wednesday 6 July (morning). The Board agreed to use the afternoon on 5 July (subject to the Assembly timetable) to meet new Members and answer queries on the Determination posed by new and returning members.

2.9 The Board agreed to consider proposals for the September meeting on strategic thinking and engagement at the meeting in March.

3 Engaging Members in the Fifth Assembly

3.1 The Board considered options for early engagement with new and returning Members following the 2016 Welsh general elections.

3.2 The Board also identified key stakeholders that they felt it would be appropriate to meet with during the early stages of the fifth Assembly. These included the new Presiding Officer, the Assembly Commission and political parties for the Fifth Assembly. They would be approached by the Board's secretariat with a view to organising meetings following the elections.

4 Proposals for Governance Principles and guidance on the conduct of business for the Remuneration Board

4.1 The Board considered a paper outlining the draft content of potential 'Governance Principles' and discussed how the document may be best utilised to inform the Board's work programme in the future.

4.2 The Board agreed that it should exchange good practice with other Boards and panels on a regular basis, for instance in the practices of taking evidence. The

Board also noted that supporting officials should engage with their peers supporting those Board and panels.

- 4.3 The Board agreed that the Governance Principles document should include reference to the Board's financial governance and, in particular the principles for managing the Board's finances appropriately.

5 Residential Allowances 2016–17: Agree consultation

- 5.1 The Board considered additional information to inform their decision on setting the maximum entitlement for the Residential Accommodation Expenditure (RAE) Allowance.
- 5.2 The Board agreed that the current provision of a £735 a month allowance is sufficient for Members. In line with this decisions, the Board also agreed to maintain the rate of the RAE subsidiary allowances relating to essential repairs on mortgaged properties which is currently set at 10% of the annual outer area allowance.
- 5.3 The Board also confirmed the sum for the caring responsibilities allowance (subject to the approval of a business case) of up to £1,440 per annum to cover the higher cost of suitable accommodation.
- 5.4 The Board agreed to consult Members on these proposals.
- 5.5 The Board agreed that the Assembly Commission's Members' Business Support should receive copies of the rental agreements of all Members from now on.

6 Policy, Research and Communications Fund: Consideration of draft guidance for Assembly Members

- 6.1 The Board discussed the draft guidance on the Policy, Research and Communications Fund, which would come into effect from the start of the Fifth Assembly.
- 6.2 The Board noted that, when the former Board came to consider the use of the Fund as part of its review of the Determination for the Fifth Assembly, it agreed on two principal changes:
- that the level of funding available to each Member would be increased from £2,000 per annum to £2,500 per annum; and

- that the fund be expanded to permit Members to engage with their constituents, hence the change of the title from 'Policy & Research Fund' to the 'Policy, Research & Communications Fund'
- 6.3 The Board noted that the Commissioner for Standards had been consulted on the draft rules and guidance and his feedback had been incorporated into the latest draft of the guidance.
- 6.4 The latest draft includes points to note:
- the communications element is not available to political parties; there will be a moratorium on the use of the fund from January in the year of a National Assembly for Wales election until that election.
- 6.5 The Board agreed that there should be an explicit prohibition on Members being able to award contracts to family members through the fund.
- 6.6 The Board noted there will be a formal review period after 12 months to ensure that the Fund is being used appropriately and achieving its aims.
- 6.7 Members' Business Support agreed to provide information on all applications during this period.

7 Support for political parties

- 7.1 The Board considered a paper on support of political parties in the Fifth Assembly and reviewed the total sum for the Political Party Support Allowance that will be available in the first year of the Fifth Assembly. The previous Board suggested that the amount set by them (£900,000) should increase in line with the pay award made to support staff for 2016–17.
- 7.2 The Board considered a number of factors, including inflation and that approximately 90% of the fund is spent on salaries. They agreed that the total Political Party Support Allowance of £900,000 should be increased by 1.1%, in line with the proposed increase in the pay award to AM Support Staff or by the change in the CPI in the year to April 2016, whichever is greater.

- 7.3 The Board noted that salaries of staff of individual Members whose posts are redundant following the election will be paid until the last day of their employment through the Members' Winding-Up allowance. However, there is no similar allowance for party group staff who are employed by the party group and not individual AMs
- 7.4 The Board therefore agreed that the salaries of party group staff whose posts are to be made redundant should be funded centrally from the Assembly Commission. The Board agreed to invite responses to this decision.

Any Other Business

- 7.5 The Board requested an overview of all resources provided to support Members, whether provided directly by the Assembly Commission or through the Determination. This should include facilities provided for home working and constituency offices.