

To: Members of the Senedd
Cc: All support staff

28 October 2022

Dear Members,

SUMMARY OF BOARD MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2022

The Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd met on Thursday 13 October. The focus of the meeting was:

- Senedd reform;
- Consideration of evidence gathered on the impact of the Cooperation Agreement on Members' pay and allowances;
- An update on the costs of living and inflationary pressures on Members' business costs;
- The Board's thematic reviews of Ways of Working and Staffing Support;
- The scope of the Board's Annual Review of the Determination for 2023/24 and approach to consulting on such;
- Members' security arrangements.

This letter provides a summary of the Board's discussions and decisions. It will be published on the Board's website along with [summaries of previous meetings](#).

1. Member Engagement

On 12 October the Board met with Adam Price MS, Andrew R T Davies MS and Jane Dodds MS to discuss the priority areas for consideration by the Board in planning for Senedd Reform. The Board is grateful to Party Leaders for their time to discuss this matter at this early stage. At the meeting on 13 October, the Board also received an update on the various Senedd reform workstreams being undertaken by the Commission and the Business Committee.

Ahead of our meeting, the Board met with the Member Representative Group to discuss the issues on our agenda.

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The Board is grateful to Group staff who facilitated visits to their offices which provided a valuable insight into how they support their Members' parliamentary duties.

2. Cost of living and inflationary pressures

The Board considered evidence on 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 agreed to keep the situation under review and to receive further information at our December meeting, to inform our consideration of any changes required to the Determination.

3. Impact of the Cooperation Agreement

We are grateful for the evidence received from Groups on the implications of the Cooperation Agreement on your work in the Senedd. The Board again noted the legal advice that Plaid Cymru are not a party in government. Based on the evidence received and range of views expressed by Groups, the Board did not feel that any changes to allowances are justified as result 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 when acting in their capacity 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](#).

4. Thematic Review of Ways of Working

The first phase of this review is underway and is focused on issues of immediate priority in respect of meeting the costs of enabling Members and their staff to work safely and effectively at home or in a hybrid arrangement. The Board agreed that work is needed to clarify and simplify the provisions in place. Changes to this effect will be consulted on as part of the annual review of the Determination for 2023/24.

Members have been notified separately via a letter issued on 20 October of the Board's decision to close the Return to the Office Fund to new applications from 30 November. The Board's decision reflected that regulations have been relaxed and the very limited use of the Fund during this financial year.

As part of the Board's commitment to establishing a better understanding of the needs of Members, the Board and Senedd Commission are currently undertaking a joint engagement exercise with Members. It is focusing on how you are working post pandemic and looking forward to future ways of working. The views gathered via this exercise will help inform the planning of further phases of the thematic review of ways of working, to be focussed on changes needed for the remainder of the sixth Senedd and for the seventh Senedd.

5. Thematic Review of Staffing Support

Over the summer we shared the draft terms of reference for the review with Representative Groups. The terms of reference were agreed by the Board on 13 October.

The first phase of the review is underway and is focussed on any changes needed to the Members' Staffing Allowance for 2023/24. 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 Members' parliamentary work has increased in complexity and will consider this further as part of the annual review of the Determination for 2023/24.

6. Annual Review of the Determination

The Board reviews the Determination on an annual basis to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. 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. Proposals for changes to the Determination will be informed by the Board's engagement with Members and other stakeholders, including the matters highlighted above.

7. Security update

The Board also received its regular annual update from the Commission's Security Team on the work done to improve security measures in Members' homes and offices and was satisfied that the provisions in the Determination enabled these important measures to be met.

8. Next Board meeting

At our next meeting on 8 December 2022 the Board will consider:

- Annual Review of Determination for 2023/24 – proposals for consultation;
- The impact of the rising cost of living and inflationary pressures on pay and allowances;

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These updates will be provided to you following each meeting of the Board. In the meantime, should you have any matters you wish to raise with me or the Board, please do not hesitate to get in touch via the Clerk to the Board, Huw Gapper, by emailing remuneration@senedd.wales.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Elizabeth Haywood

Chair, Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.