

Bwrdd Taliadau Remuneration Board

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru
National
Assembly for
Wales



Mick Antoniw AM
Chair - Standards of Conduct Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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24 June 2013

Dear Mick

Thank you for your letter of 1 May inviting the National Assembly for Wales Remuneration Board to consider the findings of your Committee's recent inquiry into Lobbying and Cross-Party Groups. We discussed the matter at our meeting last week (21 June). I am aware that your report is scheduled for debate in the Assembly this week and would like to share our views with you prior to the debate. The Board agrees with the thrust of your Committee's position on the use of allowances for participation in Cross-Party Groups and your call for greater clarity regarding this matter.

The system of allowances in place must enable Assembly Members to fulfil their duties in each area of their work. As with all use of the resources made available to Assembly Members through our *Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances*, allowances are paid or claims reimbursed for expenses necessarily incurred by Members in connection with the performance of their duties. The role of an Assembly Member will include participating in formal business at the Assembly, representing constituents and engaging with civil society.

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Although Cross-Party Groups at the Assembly are not considered a part of formal business, they are a mechanism for engaging with interest groups from a range of sectors and can play a valuable role in raising awareness of issues. As such, participation in such groups is, in principle, an appropriate Assembly activity. It is our view that allowances payable through our Determination may be used to facilitate participation in a formal activity of the group, for example a claim for overnight accommodation or travel to allow attendance at a Cross-Party Group meeting or event.

Cross-party groups are mostly organised and funded by external organisations and if they are adopted the rules developed by your Committee will increase transparency. Assembly Members must take personal responsibility for all expenses incurred and must exercise judgment in assessing the relevance of any activity being carried out to their duties as Assembly Members. Our Determination also expects Members to be committed to the principles of openness and transparency. All claims are published on the Allowance Publication System which informs the public about expenditure incurred by Members.

We will ensure that there is clarity regarding this matter and issue guidance if necessary.

Thank you for bringing the matter to our attention. I hope our comments will assist and inform the debate.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'George Reid', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Rt Hon Sir George Reid
Cadeirydd/Chair