

Bwrdd Taliadau Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol Cymru

—
Remuneration Board of the
National Assembly for Wales

Dear All

The Remuneration Board's second formal meeting was held on 28 January. The following is a summary of the Board's discussion and decisions.

Residential Accommodation Expenditure (RAE)

The Board reviewed the maximum entitlement to Residential Accommodation Expenditure (RAE) for the financial year 2016-17. We also considered subsidiary elements of the RAE such as allowances for Members with caring responsibilities.

Further information on the RAE can be found in Chapter 4 of the [Fifth Assembly Determination](#)

Subject to consultation, the Board decided to maintain the maximum entitlement to residential accommodation allowance for outer area Members which is currently £735 per month for rent payments.

The Board agreed to continue the rate of the RAE subsidiary allowance relating to essential repairs on mortgaged properties which is currently set at 10% of the annual outer area allowance.

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.

Please let us have any responses to these proposals by the 14 March, 2016. Final decisions will be taken at our next meeting on 24 March.

Rental agencies

The Board considered the process for sourcing suitable residential accommodation for Members. After the election in 2011, Members were required to identify properties within a framework agreement covering a limited number of agents. This was felt to be overly restrictive. Our aim is to give Members greater flexibility whilst also providing a list of approved suppliers to help to build relations with Members, enable the agencies to develop a knowledge of Members' requirements and ensure a certain standard within the properties. As happens currently, there would still be an approval process and controls in place to determine whether the agencies are financially viable and not connected with the Member in anyway.

Please let us know if you have any views on this approach by 14 March, 2016.

Support for Political Parties

The Board 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.

Details of the new Political Party Support Allowance can be found in Chapter 8 of the [Determination for the Fifth Assembly](#).

The Board 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.

Please let us have any responses to the proposed increase by the 14 March 2016. A final decision will be taken at our next meeting on 24 March.

Funding arrangements for the salaries of party group staff whose posts become redundant following the election.

The 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 groups. The Board recognised that having to use the parties' own budgets to cover the cost would be problematic.

The Board has therefore agreed that the salaries of party group staff whose posts are to be made redundant should be funded centrally or from the party support allowance.

Other matters

The Board received an update on preparations for the new Members' pension scheme and AMSS pension scheme. The UK Government Actuary's Department (GAD) has invited the Board, as well as the Trustees to consider options for the Assembly Commission's contribution to the new pension scheme before the contribution level is confirmed. Members agreed to examine the options available and to inform GAD of how it wishes to see the Scheme funded, by 29 February 2016.

The Board reviewed the draft guidance for the use of the Policy, Research & Communications Fund in readiness for the start of the next Assembly.

Reminder: Consultations underway

AMSS salaries:

You will recall from the [last note](#) that we are proposing to increase AMSS salaries for 2016-17 by 1.1% in line with the provisional 2015 figures for ASHE median earnings in Wales.

Office costs for 2016-17:

We are proposing to increase the office costs allowance by 1% or by the change in the CPI in the year to April 2016, whichever is greater.

The consultation on both proposals ends on the **12 February 2016**. We will make our final decisions at the 24 March meeting.

The Board is committed to maintaining an ongoing dialogue with Members so please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss anything.

Due to the impending Assembly elections and associated dissolution there will be no further meetings of the AM representative group before the end of this Assembly. If, however, Members wish to discuss issues in the meantime, I will, of course, be happy to meet. The Board's final meeting prior to the election is on 24 March.

Best Wishes,



Dame Dawn Primarolo

Cadeirydd / Chair

Bwrdd Taliadau/Remuneration Board