

30 January 2018

Dear Assembly Member,

The Remuneration Board met on 25 January. The following is a summary of its discussion and decisions, and a brief update on its work programme.

Review of staffing support for Members

The Board would like to thank all Members and support staff who have contributed to its review of staffing support for Members to date, through one to one meetings, the drop-in session held on 15 January and the survey. The Board reflected on the issues raised to date at the meeting. The terms of reference of the review are noted in the annex to this letter. The Board would like to encourage as many Members and support staff who have yet to do so, to share their views with the Board by 6 February in order to inform the Board's consideration. Your views will help inform the Board's forward work programme. Contact the [secretariat](#) to find out more about how you can share your views with the Board. All discussions are treated as confidential.

Annual Review of the Determination 2018-19

Support staff salaries for 2018-19

The Board considered the support staff salaries annual increment to apply from April 2018. It considered the broader context of pay across the UK in the public and private sectors.

Last year the Board used the latest available Welsh annual median earnings for full-time staff (as measured by the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings) to update the salary of support staff. This is the index which applies to Members' pay. The Board agreed that this remained the most suitable index for determining an appropriate pay increase for 2017-18.

The provisional ASHE figures for 2017 were released in October 2017 at 2.3 per cent.

Therefore, the Board is proposing to increase support staff salaries for 2018-19 by 2.3 per cent in line with the provisional 2017 figures for ASHE median earnings in Wales.

Office cost allowance for 2018-19

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The Board considered the office costs allowance and whether it remains appropriate for the financial year 2018-19. The Board considered a number of factors, including recent feedback from Members, Members' spend on office costs, inflation and the impact of the Assembly Commission's decision not to fund Members caseworker software centrally.

The Board noted that the uprate in the office cost allowance for 2017-18 was based on the consumer price index (CPI) for September 2016. The Board agreed, for consistency, to use the CPI rate from September 2017, which was 3 per cent, as a base in determining the uprate for 2018-19. In light of feedback received from Members and support staff the Board considered the cost implications of the change in the funding arrangements for the caseworker software and the extended requirements of the Official Languages Scheme on the office cost allowance.

The Board is therefore proposing to increase the office cost allowance by 5 per cent in line with the CPI rate for September 2017 and to address the additional cost demands which Members are expected to fund from their budget.

The Board considered representations raised by Members and their support staff regarding claiming for refreshments for visitors. The Board is of the view that this should not be reimbursable under the office cost allowance.

The Board also considered an allowance that Members can access to meet the reasonable costs of any security enhancements as the Board could not guarantee that the current ring-fenced fund will continue beyond the current financial year.

The Board is proposing to offer an uncapped allowance which will be confined to the criteria¹ which is currently used to allow Members to implement security recommendations.

Residential Accommodation Expenditure for 2018-19

The Board considered the Residential Accommodation Expenditure for 2018-19 and considered a number of factors, including Members' spend on this allowance and the local rental market.

¹ That the security review is undertaken by trained security staff and recommendations are deemed as necessary (categorised as must and should for purposes of report) and two or more quotes are received for all work.

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The Board has decided that the current allowance for outer area Members of £9,200 per annum/£775 per calendar month, the maximum amount for essential repairs of £882 per annum and the maximum amount of rental costs for Members with dependents of £120 per month should be maintained.

Please let us have any responses to the above proposals by 2 March 2018 to inform the Board's deliberations at its following meeting.

Review into identifying barriers to and incentives for standing for election to the National Assembly for Wales

In its strategy for 2016-2021 the Board outlined that one of its main priorities is to explore whether there are issues it can address within its remit to attract citizens from a broad range of demographics across Wales to stand for election to the Assembly. As Members will be aware the Wales Governance Centre was successful in an open tendering process to undertake the review. The Board has now received a report from the WGC for consideration and will consider the next steps of the review, including publication of the report, at its March meeting.

The report by the Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform

The Board noted the report by the Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform, [A Parliament that works for Wales](#) (December 2017). The Board agreed to await the outcome of the Commission's consultation and any subsequent decision to introduce legislation before considering the implications on the Board's Determination for the Sixth Assembly.

Other matters

The Board agreed to write to the Assembly Commission to request that any legislative proposals to change the name of the Assembly to Welsh Parliament would also include a provision to subsequently change the name of the Board to the "Independent Remuneration Board of the Welsh Parliament".

The Board were informed that Caroline Jones AM had been nominated as the Commission nominated Member to the Pension Board in place of Joyce Watson AM. The Board approved the nomination.

This letter will also be published on our website as is our usual practice.

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If you would like to discuss any matter with me, or with one of my fellow Board members, please do not hesitate to contact me via the secretariat.

Best wishes,



Dame Dawn Primarolo

Chair, Remuneration Board

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Annex: Terms of reference

The Board will review existing and new evidence relating to the staffing allowances provided for Members, to ensure that the financial support available supports the strategic purpose of the Assembly and facilitates the work of its Members as well as ensuring that the system of financial support for Member is robust, clear, transparent, sustainable and represents value for the taxpayer.

The review will consider:

- the adequacy of the level of support provided to Members;
- the flexibility and prescriptiveness of the current support system for Members; and
- the suitability of the current terms and conditions of Support Staff.