

6 June 2018

Dear all,

***Consultation: Review of staffing support for Members: Support for Political Parties***

***Closing date: 20 July 2018***

At its meeting on 24 May the Remuneration Board considered the evidence received to date during its review of staffing support for Members. The Board considered the responses to its consultation on increasing the flexibility of the allowances available to Members, a summary of these discussions and decisions taken is provided in the Board update letter of 6 June. The Board also considered how it could increase the flexibility of the allowance with regards to the Support for Political Parties Allowance to provide a degree of parity in the flexibility of the provisions for both Members and Political Parties. The below provides an overview of the Board's discussions and the next steps.

**Introduction**

The evidence gathered from the Board's review thus far, which includes feedback from Members and support staff, as well as the Board's previous review on the effectiveness of the Determination, indicated that there is support to introduce more flexibility into provisions contained within the Determination. The evidence suggested that the increased flexibility could address the workload pressures within offices, the preference to spend allowances on staffing rather than other expenses such as offices costs and that the current staffing structures were restrictive. Following consideration of the views received, the Board is considering whether to implement the following changes so as to increase flexibility for Political Parties in their use of various elements of the Determination, bringing it into line with what has been agreed for individual Members Staffing allowance.

### **Budgeting staffing costs for Political Parties at actual pay points**

The Board considered the matter of calculating staffing costs for Political Parties at actual pay points rather than the potential maximum cost as is the current practice.

Currently staffing costs are calculated at the "Potential Maximum Cost" as outlined in section 8.2 of the Determination. The difference between the maximum cost and the Staffing Allowance is the "Remaining Balance". It is this Remaining Balance that Political Parties have at their disposal to cover other staffing costs such as staff employed on fixed term contracts, work placements and interns, staff travel and overtime. It cannot be used to employ permanent staff.

Following the Board's decision to introduce more flexibility for individual Members' allowances within the system and to address pressure points, the Board is proposing to allow the remaining balance of the Support for Political Parties Allowance to be calculated at actual cost rather than potential maximum cost. As the Remaining Balance may change during the year as staff leave, join and other costs are incurred, there will be no change to the provisions on how this balance can be utilised. Should this proposal be implemented, this would come into effect from 1 April 2019 in line with the changes to the provisions regarding Members staffing allowance.

Alongside this proposal the Board is also proposing to publish the expenditure each Political Party makes on its Support for Political Parties Allowance. This would be an annual publication of the Party's total spend during a financial year on staffing.

### **Viring between budgets**

The Board considered the purpose of the Political Party Support Allowance and agreed that the intended use of the use allowance was significantly different from those allowances provided to individual Members.

Section 7.5 of the Board's Determination allows a Member to vire (transfer) a sum of their choosing from the Remaining Balance of their Staffing Allowance to the Support for Political Parties Allowance.

The Board is proposing to remove the provision within the Determination which allows for the virement of funds from the Member's Staffing Allowance to the Support for Political Parties Allowance. This proposal would take effect from the start of the Sixth Assembly. Those Members who currently vire from their Staffing Allowance to their respective Political Parties Allowances will be permitted to continue to vire up to the same amount annually until the end of the Fifth Assembly. The Board is of the view that no new viring arrangements into the Support for Political Parties Allowance are to be established during the remainder of this Assembly.

### **Equalities considerations**

In addition to the proposals outlined above, the Board would like to seek your views on whether any of the issues that are raised above could have an impact, or could they have a potential impact, on people who identify with protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010?

### **Other matters**

Increased flexibility will result in the amount available in Political Parties staffing allowance fluctuating during the year, depending on where their staff are on their individual pay points. Responsibility for managing this volatility will be a matter for the Member who is authorised to manage the expenditure of the allowance.

Members may wish to note that the proposals outlined above apply to the Support for Political Parties Allowance and not an individual Member's allowances.

The Board is aware that the changes described in this consultation, if implemented, would be likely to affect the underspend on the Determination and, therefore, the funds available to the Assembly Commission. The Board intends to engage the Commission directly to ensure that it has timely information about the impact of any Board decision.

### **Providing written evidence**

The Board would welcome your views on its proposals. Please let us have any responses to the above proposals by **20 July 2018** to inform the Board's deliberations at its following meeting. If you have any questions related to the review or the consultation, please contact

the secretariat. Please ensure that you have considered how the Board will use the information you provide in any response, which is noted in the Annex to this letter, before submitting your response.

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

Best wishes,



**Dame Dawn Primarolo**

**Chair, Remuneration Board**

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

## Annex A: How we will use the information you provide

### Who we are

The Remuneration Board is the data controller of the information you provide, and will ensure it is protected and used in line with data protection legislation.

### Why we are collecting this information

Your submission will be used to inform the Remuneration Board's review of the staffing support for Members.

### What we will do with your information

Submissions will be seen in full by the Remuneration Board members and the secretariat to the Board (employees of the Assembly Commission) who are involved in the consultation. Your information will be stored on the Assembly Commission's ICT network (which includes third party cloud services provided by Microsoft). Any transfer of data by Microsoft outside of the EEA is covered by contractual clauses under which Microsoft ensure that personal data is treated in line with European legislation.

### Publication of submissions

The Remuneration Board may publish some or all of your submission to this consultation on the Board's website. It may also publish extracts from your submission within documents produced following the consultation and published on the Board's website. Any submissions that are published on the Board's website will remain in the public domain.

Please let us know if you would prefer that your submission or extracts from it are not published.

If the Board publishes a submission you have provided on behalf of an organisation, it will include your name, job title and the name of your organisation with your submission. If it publishes a submission you have provided on your own behalf, it will only publish your name if you have asked us to do so.

### How long your information will be retained

Responses will be retained until the Remuneration Board has completed the consultation and any subsequent work in the areas outlined in this document. This is anticipated to be in May 2020 as the Board has committed to publishing its Determination for the Sixth Assembly, one year before the Welsh general election in 2021.

### Contacting you

The Board may use the contact details you provide to contact you in relation to this consultation and your submission, and any additional work undertaken as part of this

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review. Please inform us as you respond to the consultation if you would like us retain your contact details and contact you for these purposes. If you decide to opt into further contact, you may opt out of further contact at any point by letting us know.

### Requests for information made to the Assembly Commission

In the event of a request for information being made under access to information legislation, it may be necessary to disclose all or part of the information that you provide. This may include information which has previously been removed by the Remuneration Board for publication purposes. The Board will only do this if it is required to do so by law.

### Your rights

Your personal data will be processed for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest by the Remuneration Board.

If you would like to:

- engage any of the rights that you have under the legislation (such as the right to: request access to your own data);
- ask a question; or
- make a complaint about how your information has been used;

please contact the secretariat (<mailto:remuneration@assembly.wales>)

You can also make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) if you believe we have not used your data in line with the law. The ICO's contact details can be found on its website - [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)