

INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL REVIEW PANEL

**THURSDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2011 AT 10AM
ROOM 28 PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

APPROVED

Present: Pat McCartan, Chairman
Alan McQuillan
Dr Etta Campbell

In attendance: Georgie Campbell, Secretary

Agenda item 5:
Ruth Roberts, Deputy Head of Procurement

Agenda items 8 and 9:
John Power, Head of Research and Information

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 There were no apologies.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2.1 No interests were declared in relation to the issues scheduled for discussion.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 The draft minutes of the meeting of 2 August 2011 were agreed without amendment. The inclusion of these minutes on the IFRP website was approved.

4 MATTERS ARISING/ACTION POINTS

4.1 The Panel noted that all Action Points scheduled for completion had been achieved. Any other matters arising will be dealt with under substantive agenda items.

5 BRIEFING ON PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES

- 5.1 Ruth Roberts described the various procurement options and the procedures relating to these. The Panel expressed their gratitude for a very clear explanation.

6 DISCUSSION RE VISIT BY RT HON GEORGE REID

- 6.1 The Panel commented that Mr Reid's visit had been extremely useful. Mr Reid had provided a considerable amount of very helpful advice and a valuable insight into the methodology of the Remuneration Board of the National Assembly for Wales. This was discussed by the Panel and in particular, its relevance to the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Panel recorded their appreciation for Mr Reid's very generous assistance and support. The Chair reported that he had written to Mr Reid to express the Panel's thanks to him.

7 CONSULTATION EXERCISE

- 7.1 It was agreed that the consultation exercise planned in relation the Assembly Members' salaries and office holder allowances would be extended to include Members' expenses and pensions. It was further agreed that the consultation exercise should be launched on 15 September 2011 with a closing date of 9 December 2011. The Secretary undertook to amend the consultation documentation for approval by the Panel.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL TO ARRANGE FOR LAUNCH OF CONSULTATION EXERCISE

- 7.2 It was agreed that the business sector should be specifically targeted as part of the consultation exercise. Georgie Campbell undertook to prepare a draft letter for the Panel's approval and a circulation list which includes members of the Assembly and Business Trust as well as trades unions.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

8 INFORMATION REQUESTED AT MEETING ON 2 AUGUST 2011

- 8.1 The Panel expressed their thanks to those who had provided the considerable volume of information requested at the meeting on 2 August, in particular, the Research Service and the Finance Office.
- 8.2 The Panel asked the Secretary to enquire of the Chair of the Standards and Privileges Committee whether the remuneration of MLAs in respect of other employment had been registered for 2010/11.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

- 8.3 The Panel asked for the Secretary to arrange for them to meet with the Speaker and to provide a list of the statutory and other responsibilities of the Speaker and Deputy Speakers in advance of this meeting.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

9 RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

9.1 Survey of Assembly Members

The Panel approved the draft Questionnaire and agreed that this should be issued in hard copy to Assembly Members. The Panel also agreed that Members may respond anonymously to the Questionnaire if they wished. It was agreed that the Questionnaire should issue during week commencing 3 October 2011.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL TO ARRANGE

9.2 Research Information

The Panel asked John Power, Head of Research and Information to provide them with the following information:

- Comparison between volume of legislation dealt with by the Scottish Parliament and that dealt with by the NI Assembly since 1999
- Comparison between the numbers of people in the various occupational classifications in Northern Ireland and Great Britain
- Comparison between the salaries of MLAs and those with similar levels of responsibility in the private sector.
- NICS pay scales (Principal Officer (Grade 7) and above) compared to equivalent rates in GB
- NIA pay scales (AG4 and above)
- Comparison of activity rates in NI and GB
- Copy of the "Remit Letters" to SSRB re GB and NI Civil Service Pay Rounds
- Any paper setting out HM Government's thinking re public sector pay
- Recently published papers re pension reform eg Hutton Report
- Information re current pension schemes for elected members in Westminster, Scotland and Wales
- Any publications giving an academic view of the effectiveness of the Assembly as a legislature
- NI version of Chapters 3 and 4 of "Fit for Purpose" – the report of the Remuneration Board of the National Assembly for Wales (March 2011)

ACTION: JOHN POWER

10 REGISTER OF INTERESTS

- 10.1 Alan McQuillan undertook to provide the Secretary with an update of his entry in the Register of Interests. It was agreed that the Register of Interests should not be placed on the website until this update had been added.

ACTION: ALAN MCQUILLAN

- 10.2 The Panel asked the Secretary to provide a copy of the Assembly Members' Register of Interests for their next meeting.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

11 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

- 11.1 The Panel was content with the revised draft of the Service Level Agreement with the exception of paragraph 3.1.4 relating to legal indemnity. They asked the Secretary consult the Clerk/DG regarding their suggested amendment.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 12.1 The Panel asked for a monthly report of their expenditure in relation to their budget.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

- 12.2 The Panel asked that a copy of the 2008 legislation relating to the Assembly Members' Pension Scheme be provided for their next meeting along with minutes of recent meetings of the Trustees.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

- 12.3 Panel members informed the Secretary of their availability to the end of October 2011.

- 12.4 The Secretary reported that there had been 176 page views of the IFRP website. She undertook to provide a monthly update for future meetings which would indicate those pages which were most viewed.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

13 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The next meetings will take place as follows:

10am on Friday 7 October 2011

10am on Thursday 27 October 2011

The meeting concluded at 5pm.