

Independent
Financial
Review
Panel

Annual Report
April 2014 – March 2015

Chairperson's Introduction

This report highlights the achievements and progress of the Independent Financial Review Panel ('IFRP') for the period 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015. Our main role is to make Determinations as to the salaries and allowances and pensions payable to Members of the Assembly. The Panel publishes a Determination setting out its assessment of what monies should be paid to Members and any conditions attached to their payment and use. During the period of this report the Panel published the Northern Ireland Assembly (Members' Salaries and Allowances) Determination 2014, which can be viewed on our website. Once the Panel publishes its Determination, Members have no right of appeal. Enforcement of the rules in the Determination is a matter for the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission ('the Commission') which incorporates them into a Handbook for Members setting out detailed financial controls. The Assembly Ombudsman for Complaints may also investigate any matter referred to him concerning the conduct of an MLA. The Panel are now starting preparatory work to develop the Determination for the next Assembly which is scheduled to begin in May 2016.



PATRICK MCCARTAN CBE
Chairperson
Independent Financial Review Panel

Membership

The Chair and Panel members were appointed by the Assembly Commission on 1 July 2011 for a five year term. The Panel consists of:



Chair:
Mr Patrick McCartan
CBE, MSc (Dist),
FCIPD



Panel Member:
Dr Henrietta Campbell
CB, MD, FRCP



Panel Member:
Mr Alan McQuillan
OBE BSc (Hons)
MBA

Our Objectives

- ensuring probity, accountability and value for money with respect to the expenditure of public funds;
- securing for members of the Assembly a level of remuneration which fairly reflects the complexity and importance of the job; and does not, on financial grounds, deter people from seeking election to the Assembly; and
- securing for members adequate resources to enable them to do their jobs.

Consultations

In order to inform their deliberations, the Independent Financial Review Panel carried out research into the way in which monies paid to Members are used. As part of that process the Panel drew information from a range of sources, including external benchmarks and comparisons with other legislatures. In preparing the Determination on Members' Salaries and expenses for the new Assembly Mandate in 2016, the Panel has been consulting widely on a range of issues.

During the reporting year, the Panel undertook four consultation exercises relating to:

1. Assembly Members' Pension Scheme which closed in April 2014;
2. Consultation on NI Assembly Members' Constituency Office Rents which closed in September 2014;
3. Consultation on the Employment of Assembly Members' Staff which closed in March 2015; and
4. Consultation on Prior Disclosure of Interests which closed in March 2015.

The Panel intends to offer two further consultation exercises in the 2015/16 year relating to Members' Salaries and Office Holders Allowances and Assembly Members' Office Costs, travel and childcare expenditure. When these consultations have been completed the Panel will draft its Determination for the period 2016-2021 with a view to publishing by December 2015 to assist those considering or continuing in office and/or seeking election to be able to see the monies available to them well in advance of any Assembly election.

Liaison Meetings

The Panel held liaison meetings with Senior Management of the Commission in January and February 2015 to facilitate and promote communication and understanding between the Secretariat and the Panel. It was agreed that the meetings would continue for the remainder of the year to create opportunities to discuss and clarify on-going matters of mutual concern and offer a forum for communication between the Panel and Senior Management.

IFRP Meetings and Panel attendance

The Independent Financial Review Panel met a total of seventeen times during the period of this report. Of these meeting Mr McCartan attended 17, Dr Campbell attended 15 and Mr McQuillan attended 13. In addition there were several meetings with the media in relation to ongoing press queries. In pursuing their commitment to transparency, the Panel also held meetings with other interested stakeholders.

	Date of meeting	Purpose
1	11-Apr-14	IFRP Meeting
2	08-May-14	IFRP Meeting
3	08-May-14	Media Interview
4	14-May-14	Media Interview
5	23-May-14	IFRP Meeting
6	19-Jun-14	Meeting with Clerk/Chief Executive
7	26-Jun-14	Media Interview
8	30-Jun-14	Meeting with Assembly Members
9	01-Aug-14	IFRP Meeting
10	05-Aug-14	Meeting with Clerk/Chief Executive
11	14-Aug-14	IFRP Meeting
12	22-Aug-14	IFRP Meeting
13	02-Oct-14	IFRP Meeting
14	23-Oct-14	IFRP Meeting
15	13-Nov-14	IFRP Meeting
16	26-Nov-14	IFRP Meeting
17	10-Dec-14	IFRP Meeting
18	15-Jan-15	Liaison Meeting
19	23-Jan-15	IFRP Meeting
20	29 Jan 15	Meeting with Commissioner for Standards
21	06-Feb-15	IFRP Meeting
22	18-Feb-15	IFRP Meeting
23	26-Feb-15	Liaison Meeting
24	26-Feb-15	IFRP Meeting
25	10-Mar-15	IFRP Meeting
26	19 Mar 15	Meeting with Commissioner for Standards
27	30-Mar-15	IFRP Meeting

Financial Report

The Panel's budget for the year to 31 March 2015 was £13.90k which would be used to fund General Administrative Expenditure such as external research, specialist advice, printing costs, travel costs etc. This excluded the budget for Panel Members' fees which was £30.98k.

A breakdown of the costs incurred by the Panel during the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 is shown below:

	2014/2015 BUDGET	2014/2015 AMOUNT SPENT	2014/15 UNDERSPEND
	£	£	£
PANEL FEES			
Mr Patrick McCartan, Chair		8,465	
Dr Henrietta Campbell		2,956	
Mr Alan McQuillan		3,968	
Total Panel Fees	30,984	15,389	15,595 (50.3%)
Total General Admin Expenditure	13,900	5,333	8,567 (61.6%)
Totals	44,884	20,722	24,162 (53.8%)

Code of Conduct

The Independent Financial Review Panel is committed to reviewing its Code of Conduct annually. No breaches of the Code of Conduct have occurred during the reporting period. A copy of the Code of Conduct is available on the IFRP website www.ifrp.org.uk

Declaration of Interests

The Independent Financial Review Panel's Code of Conduct contains a commitment to maintain a Register of Interests. In addition, at each meeting of the IFRP, there is a standing agenda item to allow the Chair or members to declare any interests which they have in relation to the issues to be discussed. The purpose of the Register is to provide information on any financial interests or other material benefits which the Chair or a member of IFRP receives which might reasonably be thought by others to influence his or her actions or decisions taken in his or her capacity as Chair or member of the IFRP.

The Chair and each Panel member is responsible for his/her own entry and for providing any additional information which may be relevant at meetings of the IFRP. Entries are amended on an ongoing basis as necessary. A copy of this document can be accessed on the IFRP website.

For further information on the work and membership of the Independent Financial Review Panel, please contact:

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