

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL REVIEW PANEL

Thursday 26 May 2016, 10:00 am

ROOM 241, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr Pat McCartan (Chairperson)
Dr Etta Campbell

In attendance: Simon Burrowes, Kathryn Aiken, Diane Lamont (item 7 only)

1. Apologies

Alan McQuillan.

2. Declaration of interests

None.

3. Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the meeting of 19 May were agreed.

4. Matters Arising

Completed and/or substantive items on the agenda.

5. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

The draft MoU had previously been agreed. A copy with signed by Trevor Reaney was available and the Chairman signed on behalf of the Panel.

6. Members Handbook

Still no formal response from IPSA.

7. Pension queries

Diane Lamont from HR attended for this item. The Panel confirmed that it was content that any existing AVCs could continue, but that no new provisions should be made. The Panel discussed a query that HR had forwarded from the Attorney General and agreed that it was a matter for his employer, which the Panel understood to be OFMDFM under the Justice Act 2002.

8. Annual Report

The Panel discussed the latest draft of its report for 2015/16. Suggested amendments were made. Simon will incorporate and send a revised draft to the Panel for consideration. **[ACTION: Chairperson and Simon]**

9. Correspondence

The Panel noted a letter from IPSA 24 May on the pay of Committee Chairs at Westminster.

10. IPSA Consultation on MPs' Business Costs and Expenses

The Panel considered a draft response provided by Alan to the IPSA consultation exercise on MPs' business costs and expenses (the consultation closes on 24 October 2016). After discussion, the Panel asked Simon to review the document and draft a covering letter for issue to IPSA. **[ACTION: Simon]**

11. Official opposition

The Panel discussed and considered the question of official opposition. The Panel noted that an official Opposition came into being on 25 May under Standing Order 45A. The Panel asked Simon to seek further advice on its remit to make provision in respect of salaries, allowances etc in respect of that Opposition, not least the positions referred to in section 5 of the Assembly and Executive Reform (Assembly Opposition) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. The Panel also agreed to write to the Speaker seeking his guidance as to how and when the Assembly will make the appropriate provisions in Standing Orders as required in the 2016 Opposition Act. **[ACTION: Simon]**

12. Winding up of Panel's Affairs

The Panel agreed that it should write to the Speaker and Chief Executive before the end of the Panel's period of appointment to draw attention to any matters outstanding and to officially thank them for the help and assistance provided to the Panel. It was also noted that such a letter might also act as a cover for the submission of the Panel's 2015/16 Annual Report. **[ACTION: Simon]**

13. 2016 Determination: Implementation Update

Simon advised the Panel that Finance had reported no new queries in respect of the Determination's implementation and that the issues around disability had been resolved. He also advised that Finance had been under huge pressure to get the May payroll run and ensure as smooth as possible a transition. The Panel again recorded its appreciation to all concerned for the time and effort they had put into implementing the Determination. There was some discussion about job advertisements that had appeared for Members' support staff. The Panel asked Simon to draw to Finance's attention some further concerns it had over advertisements. **[ACTION: Simon]**

14. Date of next meetings

The Panel agreed to meet again after the proposed liaison meeting on 15 June.

Meeting ended 12.40 pm