

INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL REVIEW PANEL

**TUESDAY 2 AUGUST 2011 AT 10AM
ROOM 28 PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

APPROVED

Present: Pat McCartan, Chairman
Alan McQuillan
Dr Etta Campbell

In attendance: Georgie Campbell, Secretary
Tony Logue, Head of Commission and Corporate
Support Unit

Agenda item 5:

Richard Stewart, Director of Corporate Services
Paula McClintock, Head of Finance
Louise Anderson, Human Resources

Agenda items 7 and 8:

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 11 July 2011 were agreed without amendment. The inclusion of these minutes on the IFRP website was approved.

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Code of Conduct

The draft Code of Conduct was approved without amendment. It was agreed that this should be placed on the IFRP website.

4.2 Rules of Procedure

The draft Rules of Procedure were approved without amendment. It was agreed that these should be placed on the IFRP website.

4.3 Register of Interests

The proposed format for the Register of Interests was approved. It was agreed that any gift, hospitality or material benefit to the Chair, a member or their partners with a material benefit exceeding £5 received from any individual or body which in any way relates to the responsibilities of IFRP should be declared.

The Panel Members undertook to provide the necessary details to the Secretary. It was agreed that, once complete, the Register of Interests should be placed on the IFRP website. The Chair asked that this issue is included on the agenda for the next meeting.

**ACTION: IFRP PANEL MEMBERS
GEORGIE CAMPBELL TO INCLUDE ON THE AGENDA
FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

4.4 Key Priorities

The draft Key Priorities were approved without amendment. It was agreed that these should be placed on the IFRP website.

4.5 Stationery

The proposed IFRP notepaper was approved. The Secretary undertook to order stationery and to send a supply to Panel members. Mr McQuillan asked if he could have a Word version of the notepaper.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

4.6 Website

The panel was content with the proposals regarding the IFRP website. The Secretary undertook to send them a link to the test site and to arrange for the website, including the email address to go "live" as soon as possible.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

4.7 MLAs who are also councillors

Panel members noted the list of MLAs who are also elected members local councils.

5 ASSEMBLY MEMBERS' SALARIES, EXPENDITURE AND PENSIONS

5.1 Mr Stewart, Ms McClintock and Ms Anderson briefed the Panel on Assembly Members' salaries, Office Holder allowances, expenditure and pensions and responded to questions from Panel Members.

5.2 The Chair asked that a table similar to that included in the NI Assembly (Members' Salaries) Determination 2000 is included on the website.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

5.3 The Panel asked for an analysis of salaries, Office Holder allowances and expenditure claimed by Assembly Members during 2010/11 in tabular and graphical format.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART/PAULA MCCLINTOCK

5.4 Ms McClintock said that an analysis of salaries paid to Party staff is currently being carried out and that this will be made available to IFRP on completion.

ACTION: PAULA MCCLINTOCK

5.5 Ms Anderson informed the Panel that the Assembly Members' Pension Scheme is administered by the Pension Trustees. The Panel asked that a copy of the Actuarial Report in relation to the Assembly Member's Pension Scheme is provided for the next meeting of IFRP.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART/PAULA MCCLINTOCK

5.6 The Panel asked that the Assembly Member's Pension Scheme, including the Actuary's Report, is included as an item on agenda for the meeting following the next one.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

5.7 The Chair thanked Mr Stewart, Ms McClintock and Ms Anderson for their very comprehensive and informative briefing.

6 PREVIOUS REVIEWS OF ASSEMBLY MEMBERS' PAY AND ALLOWANCES

6.1 Mr Logue briefed the Panel on the reviews of Assembly Members' pay and allowances carried out by the Review Body on Senior Salaries and the outcome of these. He undertook to provide the Panel with a paper showing the progression in Assembly members' salaries and allowances since 1998.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE

6.2 The Panel thanked Mr Logue for the information and the very valuable insight which he had provided.

7 ASSEMBLY MEMBERS' SALARIES, OFFICE HOLDER ALLOWANCES AND PENSIONS: COMPARISON WITH OTHER LEGISLATURES

Mr Power provided the Panel with a Briefing Note on Members' Salaries and Pensions which included a comparison with those of Westminster, the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and Dáil Éireann and they discussed its contents. The Chair thanked Mr Power and the author of the Briefing Note, Dr Barry, for this very useful information.

8 RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

- 8.1 The Panel asked Mr Power to provide a paper showing the average earnings progression in the public and private sectors in Northern Ireland since 1998 and where possible, a comparison with the other regions in the UK.

ACTION: JOHN POWER

- 8.2 The Panel asked Mr Power to provide the following information:

- income earned for Council duties by MLAs who are also councillors;
- a list of MLAs who are also Office Holders and those offices which they hold;
- the public offices held by each MLA;
- where possible, MLAs who are in other employment, and,
- changes as a result of the recession etc in the NI jobmarket since the most recent SSRB Report.

ACTION: JOHN POWER

- 8.3 The Panel discussed the further research which they will require and how that might be sourced. It was agreed to return to this issue at the next meeting.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL TO INCLUDE ON THE AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING

9 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel decided to first address the review of Members' salaries and Office Holder allowances. This decision was taken on the basis that the Determination governing these was now eleven years old and considerably out of date. A Determination in relation to Members' Expenses was made in 2010 and it was felt that because of the recent implementation of this Determination and of its complexity, this review could be deferred to a later date. In addition, the time required for the considerable amount of research and consultation needed to address Members' expenditure might prejudice the urgency required in

relation to salaries and office holder allowances should both be done in tandem.

The meeting was suspended at this point and resumed one hour later.

10 CONSULTATION/EVIDENCE GATHERING PROCESS

- 10.1 The Panel agreed to begin the consultation process in relation to the review of Members' salaries and office holder allowances in early September 2011. It was agreed that this would be discussed in detail at the next meeting of IFRP.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL TO INCLUDE ON THE AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- 10.2 It was agreed that the Panel should write to all Assembly Party Leaders and also the independent Member, to invite them to meet with the Panel to discuss the methodology which they will adopt and to take their views on how best to engage with Assembly Members. The Secretary undertook to draft an appropriate letter for the Panel's approval and to arrange for issue as soon as the Panel's headed notepaper is available.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

- 10.3 The Panel said that they would welcome a briefing from the Head of Procurement in relation to procurement procedures eg timescales, thresholds etc.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL TO ARRANGE

11 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

The Panel considered the draft Service Level Agreement and asked for additions to be made in relation to corporate governance and the reporting arrangements for Assembly Secretariat staff supporting the Panel. At the Panel's request Mr Logue undertook to check the position regarding legal indemnity for the Panel members and to draft a suitable paragraph in relation to this for inclusion in the Service Level Agreement.

**ACTION: TONY LOGUE
GEORGIE CAMPBELL TO INCLUDE ON THE AGENDA
FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 Complaints Procedure

The Secretary informed the Panel that since it is designated as a public authority under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, it is required to have a Complaints Procedure. The Panel approved the proposed Complaints Procedure and agreed that this should be placed on the IFRP website.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

12.2 Responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

The Secretary reported to the Panel that the Equality Commission had confirmed that by virtue of the fact that IFRP is considered to be a public authority under the Commissioner for Complaints (NI) Order, it is also required to comply with the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This will have implications for any consultation process which the Panel undertakes. The Equality Commission will confirm whether IFRP is required to have an Equality Scheme.

12.3 Meeting with George Reid

The Panel agreed that an early meeting with George Reid, the Chair of the National Assembly for Wales' Remuneration Board, would be very useful. The Secretary undertook to obtain contact details for Mr Reid.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

12.4 Public Attitude Survey

Mr Logue undertook to provide the Panel with a copy of the recent Public Attitude Survey carried out by the Assembly Secretariat.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

**The next meeting will take place at 10am on Thursday
1 September 2011 – venue to be confirmed.**

The meeting concluded at 4pm.