

INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL REVIEW PANEL

10AM ON THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER 2011

IN ROOM 27 PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present: Pat McCartan, Chairman
Alan McQuillan
Dr Etta Campbell

In attendance: Georgie Campbell, Secretary

Agenda item 5:
Richard Stewart, Director of Corporate Services

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 7 October 2011 were agreed without amendment. The inclusion of these minutes as drafted on the IFRP website was approved.

4 MATTERS ARISING/ACTION POINTS

4.1 Action Points

The Panel noted that all Action Points had been completed.

4.2 Survey of Assembly Members: Update

Georgie Campbell reported that 30 questionnaires had been returned and that she had been notified of a further 6 (approximately) to follow.

4.3 Letters to Business Leaders

Georgie Campbell reported that as part of the consultation exercise, letters had issued to approximately 70 business leaders on 20 October 2011.

4.4 Register of Members' Interests

IFRP members noted the contents of the Register of Members' Interests.

4.5 Forthcoming changes to public sector pensions

IFRP members noted the contents of the DFP consultation paper on this issue.

4.6 Time spent by MLAs on various activities

IFRP members agreed to return to this issue during their discussions on MLA salaries.

5 FINANCIAL ISSUES

5.1 Richard Stewart joined the Panel for this agenda item and they had a discussion on a wide range of issues.

5.3 Richard Stewart undertook to provide the Panel with more detailed information.

6 INTERIM DETERMINATION

6.1 The Chair had written to the Clerk/DG seeking his assurance that the cost of living increase in Members Expenses provided for in the 2008 Determination would not be implemented in 2011/12 and thereafter. The Panel noted the response from the Clerk/DG dated 26 October which provided advice to the Panel in relation to this issue and agreed to discuss the issue of indexation in relation to both expenses and pensions as part of their deliberations.

7 REFERENCE MATERIAL

7.1 The Panel noted the reference material which had been provided for this meeting and agreed to return to it.

7.2 The Panel noted the Assembly Questions in relation to Members' salaries and expenses. The Secretary undertook to forward the replies to these to the Panel as soon as they were available.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

8 RESEARCH MATERIAL

- 8.1 The Panel commented on the absence of information about private and public sector comparators with MLA responsibilities and agreed to commission research on this issue. The Panel outlined the information which they require and identified organisations who might provide this. The Secretary informed the Panel that under the procurement regulations, three written quotes will be required for an exercise of this size. The Secretary undertook to draft an appropriate letter for the Panel's approval and to draw up a list of companies to be invited to undertake this work. The Secretary also undertook to check with the Head of Procurement that the Panel's proposals conformed with procurement regulations.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

- 8.2 It was agreed that the letters should issue by 4 November with a closing date for bids of 18 November.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL TO ARRANGE

- 8.3 The Panel recorded their thanks to the staff from the Assembly's Research Office for their paper setting out the evolution of the NI Assembly.
- 8.4 The Panel noted the contents of the document setting out the operational aspects of the NI Assembly and they agreed that this would help inform their discussions about the roles and responsibilities of Assembly Members.

9 MONTHLY REPORTS

- 9.1 The Panel noted their expenditure to date in relation to their budget for 2011/12 and also the number of page views on the IFRP website.

10 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

- 10.1 The Panel confirmed that they hoped to have a draft Report relating the Assembly Members' salaries and office holder allowances prepared for consultation with relevant individuals by Xmas. It was agreed that the Panel would have a "workshop" session to review the information and comments which had been provided to them to date.
- 10.2 The Panel agreed that it would be very helpful if Professor Monojit Chatterji, a member of the Remuneration Board for the National

Assembly for Wales would meet with them to discuss the research which he had undertaken in relation to the salaries of Assembly Members in Wales. The Panel asked the Secretary to contact Professor Chatterji.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 There was no further business

12 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

10AM ON THURSDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2011 (WORKSHOP)

10AM ON MONDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2011(FORMAL MEETING)

The meeting concluded at 16.30pm