

The logo for the Independent Financial Review Panel is a solid blue rectangle. Inside the rectangle, the words "Independent", "Financial", "Review", and "Panel" are stacked vertically in a yellow, sans-serif font.

Independent
Financial
Review
Panel

**INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL REVIEW PANEL
CONSULTATION ON MEMBERS' OFFICE
COST, TRAVEL AND CHILDCARE
EXPENDITURE**

**DEADLINE FOR RESPONSES:
5 PM ON FRIDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2015**

A copy of this consultation document can be accessed on the IFRP website (www.ifrp.org.uk), by email (info@ifrp.org.uk) or by writing to the IFRP at:

The Independent Financial Review Panel
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

The Consultation Document can be made available in large type on request.

Foreword

The Independent Financial Review Panel ('the Panel') was established in July 2011 to independently set the pay, allowances and pensions of Members and office holders of the Northern Ireland Assembly ('the Assembly'). Our remit includes a range of subjects, including Members' Salaries and Allowances paid to office holders within the Assembly and Executive, Pensions, Office Costs paid to Members to support their work in constituencies, and travel and subsistence expenditure.

The Panel publishes a Determination setting out its assessment of what monies should be paid to Members and any restrictions on how they can be paid or spent. We normally only publish one Determination per Assembly Mandate. 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 Financial Support for Members Handbook ('the Members' Handbook') setting out detailed financial controls. We are now starting to develop our Determination for the next Assembly which is scheduled to begin in May 2016. It is our intention to publish this well in advance of the start of the new Assembly so all existing Members and those who might consider running for election to the Assembly can see what will be available to them should they be successful.

In developing its Determination, the Panel is required by law to:

- Secure for Members a level of remuneration which fairly reflects the complexity and importance of their functions and does not, on financial grounds, deter people with the necessary commitment and ability from seeking election to the Assembly;
- Secure for Members adequate resources to enable them to exercise their functions as Members of the Assembly; and
- Ensure probity, accountability and value for money with respect to the expenditure of public funds.

PATRICK MCCARTAN CBE, Chairman, Independent Financial Review Panel
DR HENRIETTA CAMPBELL CB, Panel Member
ALAN MCQUILLAN OBE, Panel Member

Consultation Questions on Constituency Office Expenses

Following the information provided on pages 5 to 16, we are now seeking your views in relation to each of our proposals. Please tick the relevant box in the columns to the right and use the space provided at the end of the questions to add any further comments.

Q		Yes	No	No Opinion
1	Do you agree that the current system of Office Cost Expenditure should be replaced with a Constituency Office Expense of no more than £13,500 per Member per annum? (page 7 refers)		✓	
2	Do you agree that an overall limit of not more than £8,000 per annum should be set for all premises rented by Members as a constituency office? (para 4.3 refers)		✓	
3	Do you agree that where a Member shares premises with another Assembly Member the allowable rental limit should be set at not more than £6,000 for each Member in the premises? (para 5.3 refers)	✓		
4	Do you agree that where a Member shares premises with an MP, MEP or Councillor (including a councillor who works for them as an employee) the allowable rental limit would be set at not more than £4,000 per annum for each Member in the premises? (para 5.4 refers)		✓	
5	Do you agree that where any benefit from the payment of rent on a Member's constituency office accrues to a connected or associated person, the allowable rental limit would be set at not more than £4,000 per annum? (para 5.5 refers)		✓	
6	Do you agree that each Member may only claim rent expenses in respect of one set of premises in their constituency? (para 6.1 refers)		✓	
7	Do you agree that where Members voluntarily use their home as their office they should be able to claim a personal allowance of not more than £2,000 in lieu of rent expenses and to defray the costs they incur? (para 7.1 refers)		✓	
8	Do you agree that all leases signed by Members must be non-repairing leases (i.e. leases under which the landlord is obliged to maintain the premises)? (para 8.3 refers)	✓		
9	Do you agree with the Panel's proposals on page 11 relating to constituency office opening hours?		✓	
10	Do you agree with the Panel's proposals on page 11/12 relating to constituency office signage?		✓	

11	Do you agree with the Panel's proposals on page 12 to change the rules on the use of constituency offices for electoral purposes?	✓		
12	Do you agree that Constituency Reports should be produced in line with the guidelines on page 13 and in electronic format only?		✓	
13	Do you agree that a range of electronic office equipment and mobile phones should be provided centrally by the Commission to each Member to assist the operation of their constituency office? (page 13 refers)	✓		
14	Do you agree that all equipment would remain the property of the Commission and would be returnable upon a Member leaving office? (page 14 refers)		✓	
15	Do you agree with the Panel's proposal that all expenses claimed by Members under COE would be subject to an annual audit by External Auditors, through a 20% random sample chosen by the appointed auditors on an annual basis? (page 15 refers)		✓	

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Please use the space below to include any further comments you have relating to the Panel's proposals on Members' Constituency Office Expenditure:

Consultation Questions on Travel Expenditure

Following the information provided on pages 19 to 24, can we now seek your views below in relation to each of our proposals? Please tick the relevant box in the columns to the right and use the additional space provided at the end of the questions to add any further comments.

Q		Yes	No	No Opinion
16	Do you agree that the payment of home to office mileage for all Members should cease with effect from the start of the New Mandate? (para 15.10 refers)	✓		
17	Do you agree that individual mileage and subsistence claims should be replaced by a flat rate Travel and Subsistence payment, based on criteria set out at paragraph 16.1 for each Member?	✓		
18	If you answered yes to question 17, do you consider the rates detailed in Table 3 on page 23 appropriate?	✓		
19	Do you agree that to qualify for the full amount of TSE, a total of 99 days attendance (i.e. 90% of 110 days) in Parliament Buildings must be registered by the Member in each calendar year? (page 16 refers)		✓	
20	Do you agree that where attendance falls below 99 days, the Member must repay 1% of the allowance in respect of each day below this number within two months of the end of the year? (page 16 refers)		✓	

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Please use the space below to include any further comments you have relating to Members' Travel and Subsistence Expenditure:

Consultation Question on Childcare Expenses

Q		Yes	No	No Opinion
21	Do you believe the Panel should continue to provide a childcare allowance to Members based on the rates stated above?	✓		
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS				
Please use the space below to include any further comments you have relating to Members' Childcare Expenses:				

18.1 Additional Comments

Please use this space to include any additional comments you may have on the proposals outlined in this consultation document. Your response and comments will help inform our decisions for our next Determination.

Should you wish to respond electronically, please download the consultation proposals by typing or pasting the following link into your internet browser:
<http://ifrp.org.uk/consultation/>

Alternatively you may send your response to:

Independent Financial Review Panel
Room 241, Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX
E-mail: info@ifrp.org.uk

You may wish to note that the names of respondees and, in some cases, the full response, will be published unless you indicate when you submit your response that you do not wish this to happen.

Are you content that your information is published?

YES

NAME: Nicola Hunter

ORGANISATION (IF APPLICABLE):

ADDRESS:

Please note that it is not essential to include your details. You may respond anonymously if you prefer to do so.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

**THE DEADLINE FOR RESPONSES TO THIS CONSULTATION IS
5PM ON FRIDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2015.**

**RESPONSES RECEIVED AFTER THIS DATE MAY NOT BE
CONSIDERED.**

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

The Independent Financial Review Panel may publish, or make available on request, any information provided to it in relation to this consultation exercise. In line with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998, information containing personal data will not be disclosed. You should be aware that your response, or an extract from it, may appear in a Report or may be included on a list of evidence submitted. In the event of a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, it may be necessary to disclose information which you provide.

If you are providing any information, other than personal data, which you feel is not suitable for public disclosure; you should identify that information and provide reasons against its disclosure. The Independent Financial Review Panel will take this into account when publishing information or when responding to requests for information.

CONTACT DETAILS

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