

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL REVIEW PANEL

Thursday 19 May 2016, 10:15 am

ROOM 248, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr Pat McCartan (Chairperson)
Dr Etta Campbell
Mr Alan McQuillan

In attendance: Simon Burrowes, Kathryn Aiken, Jonathan McMillen (11:30 to 12:10, items 10 and 11)), Richard Stewart and Paula McClintock (12:00 to 12:55, item 12)

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declaration of interests

None.

3. Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the meeting of 26 April were agreed.

4. Matters Arising

Completed and/or substantive items on the agenda.

5. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

The draft MoU provided by Trevor Reaney in his letter of 10 May 2016 was agreed. The Panel asked Simon to advise Trevor and to make arrangements to have the MoU signed. **[ACTION: Simon]**

6. Members Handbook

IPSA have provided draft comments on the handbook, but final cleared comments are awaited. Simon advised the Panel that Finance did not expect there to be any substantive changes to the handbook and that IPSA's comments would be provided to the Panel when they were received. **[ACTION: Simon]**

7. Pension queries

It was noted that HR had forwarded two queries relating to the pension schemes, one in respect of the Attorney General and one about AVCs. Due to the unavoidable absence of an HR representative, the panel agreed to discuss the item at its next meeting. **[ACTION: Simon]**

8. Annual Report

Simon had provided the Panel with a draft report for 2015/16. The Panel agreed to discuss the report at its next meeting. **[ACTION: Chairperson and Simon]**

9. Correspondence

The Panel considered a letter from IPSA dated 11 May regarding a consultation exercise on MPs' business costs and expenses (the consultation closes on 24 October 2016) and an email from Trevor Reaney dated 13 May 2016. The Panel noted Trevor's email and the progress and manner of the implementation of the Determination. The Panel also agreed that it should contribute to the IPSA consultation and asked that the item be put on the agenda for its next meeting. Alan agreed to draft some bullet points that the Panel might wish to include in its response. **[ACTION: Alan and Simon]**

10. Future of the Panel

The panel discussed at some length the impending situation relating to the termination of its appointment on 1 July 2016 and the potential that no replacement Panel would be in place by then or indeed for some time. The Panel expressed great concern that such a situation would be allowed to pertain and asked that the matter be tabled on the agenda for the next liaison meeting with Trevor Reaney. The Panel also agreed to consider further how and to whom its concerns might be communicated, and to consider what further actions it wished to take with regard to winding up its period in office. **[Action: Panel and Simon]**

11. Official opposition

The Panel discussed and considered, with the assistance of advice and guidance from Jonathan, a variety of issues in relation to the possible formation of an official opposition in the Assembly and whether the Panel could or should make some provision for any offices held as part of such an opposition. It was agreed that the Panel would consider further once it became clear whether such an opposition was formed. The Panel asked that the issue be put on the agenda for its next meeting. **[Action: Simon]**

12. 2016 Determination: Queries

The Panel discussed four queries in relation to the Determination. The discussion was informed by advice provided by Jonathan McMillen. It was agreed that Simon would draft appropriate responses. **[ACTION: Simon]**

13. 2016 Determination: Implementation

Richard and Paula updated the Panel on the situation and workload relating to the implementation of the Determination, and the Panel expressed its thanks to them

and all their staff for their professionalism and dedication. Richard provided a broad overview of issues, noting that there have been some changes to support staff contracts as the transition from the 2012 to 2016 Determinations take effect, and he provided some commentary on how the various parts of the Determination were being dealt with. There was some discussion about job advertisements that had appeared for Members' support staff; Paula assured the Panel that all contracts and recruitment processes will be scrutinised to ensure that they are in line with the Determination. The issue of disability expenses was discussed at some length in light of two cases that had been highlighted. Richard and Paula explained the background to the two cases and the action being taken. The Panel noted and endorsed the action being taken and asked that it be kept up to date. Paula will write to the Panel regarding an issue relating to childcare. **[ACTION: Simon and Paula]**

14. Date of next meetings

The Panel agreed to meet again on Thursday 26 May at 10:00am and asked Simon to arrange another liaison meeting with Trevor.

Meeting ended 1.00 pm