

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2013**

REPORT BY: **HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

SUBJECT: **CONSULTATION BY THE INDEPENDENT
REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES (IRPW)**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.01 To consider the Council's response to consultation by the IRPW on its draft annual report for 2014/15.
- 1.02 To inform Council of changes to payments to co-opted members.

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 The IRPW determines the allowances payable to Members. It consults on its proposed annual report prior to issuing each year's report.
- 2.02 On the 1 October 2013 the Council received the IRPW draft annual report for 2014/15 for consultation purposes. Responses to the consultation need to be received by the IRPW no later than the 26 November 2013. A copy of the draft report has been placed in Member Services and in each of the Group Rooms.
- 2.03 A report on the consultation document was submitted to the Constitution Committee meeting on the 16 October 2013. At that meeting the separate proposals by the IRPW were considered in turn and the committee's views established. It was also agreed that the Democracy & Governance Manager would prepare a draft response and consult with the Committee Chair and the Leader of the Council on it.
- 2.04 On the 1 November 2013 the IRPW issued a supplemental report in respect of payments to co-opted members (Appendix 1). The determinations in that supplemental report are to take effect on the 1 January 2014. These proposals had been the subject of separate consultation between the 1 August 2013 and 26 September 2013.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 This year's draft report follows the IRPW visiting each of the 22 principal authorities to discuss how its determinations are working in practice and what matters it should consider for this annual report and

for the future. The IRPW spent the 25 April 2013 meeting various groups of Members and officers of Flintshire.

- 3.02 The first proposed change the IRPW are consulting on is to increase basic allowance in 2014/15 from the current £13,175 to £13,300 p.a. In the last 3 years there has been a reduction in funding for local authorities and a freeze on public sector pay. Therefore the Panel had determined that during that period it would be inappropriate to increase allowances. However, given the modest relaxation in the constraints on public sector pay this year, the Panel is proposing to increase basic allowance by less than 1% from spring 2014. In relation to this proposed change the Constitution Committee agreed that this should only be proposed on the basis NJC staff are receiving at least the same percentage increase.
- 3.03 The second proposed change relates to the payments to Leader, Deputy Leader and other Cabinet members. Whilst these amounts continue to vary according to the size of population served by a Council, this variation is proposed to be narrowed. Flintshire is in the middle of the three population groups and the Panel propose to increase the amount paid to the Leader by £500 p.a., that to the Deputy Leader by £40 p.a. and that to Cabinet members by £220 p.a. There are smaller increases for the small number of larger authorities and larger increases for those authorities with smaller populations than Flintshire. These proposed changes in differentials are rather minor. The Constitution Committee were of the view that this should only be proposed where the workforce were having a 1% or more increase in their pay.
- 3.04 The third proposed change is a more significant one in that it is giving local choice to each County Council to choose which of three salary bands to pay each individual Committee Chair. At present all Committee Chairs receive the same extra payment for their added responsibility. It is proposed that in future this will be either £8,700, £6,700 or £4,700 as determined by each individual authority for each individual Chair. At present the uplift on basic allowance amounts to £8,735 p.a. The Constitution Committee agreed with this proposed change.
- 3.05 The next proposed change is to increase the amount paid to the Leader of what the IRPW calls the largest 'opposition group'. It is proposed that this increase on basic salary would be £8,700 p.a. whereas at present it is only £3,745 p.a. In paragraph 3.14 of its draft report the Panel indicate that they take the view that the payment for this position is important for local democracy. In relation to this proposed change the Constitution Committee was of the view that there should be greater local choice and that it be left to individual authorities to decide how this amount should be awarded to the Leaders of the groups not represented on the Cabinet.

- 3.06 The Panel also proposes to introduce more flexibility and local choice for the amount paid to Civic Heads and Deputy Civic Heads. As with Committee Chairs it is proposed that Councils can choose the level of payment from three bands of payment. The middle of these bands is the nearest to our current payments and would result in an increase of £125 p.a. for the Chair but a reduction of £625 p.a. for the Vice Chair. The top band would be an increase of £2,625 p.a. for the Chair and £1,375 p.a. for the Vice Chair. The Constitution Committee welcomed this proposal for more flexibility and local choice in payments to Civic Heads and deputy Civic Heads.
- 3.07 In the draft report the Panel makes clear that all Councillors should be provided with adequate telephone and e-mail facilities and electronic access to appropriate information without cost to the individual Member. At the Constitution Committee this was noted.
- 3.08 The draft report proposes to remove the current maximum reimbursement for an overnight stay in Cardiff (£120) and for all such overnight stays outside of London for the maximum to be £95. The draft report explains that this brings payable rates in line with Welsh Government rates. The Constitution Committee agreed with this proposal.
- 3.09 The draft annual report makes no proposals to change the limit of 18 on a number of so called 'senior salaries' which Flintshire can pay its members who have special responsibilities. This represents 25.7% of the Council membership when for other smaller Councils it can be as high as 50%. At the consultation meeting in April representations were made to the IRPW to increase this limit. At the Constitution Committee meeting it was agreed that representations should be made to increase the number of Flintshire Councillors eligible for 'senior salaries' as there was no good reason for the discrepancy in the proportion of members between the larger authorities such as Flintshire and a small authority.
- 3.10 To assist Council in its consideration of how to respond to consultation on the draft annual report Appendix 2 sets out a proposed response.
- 3.11 In relation to co-opted members these parts of the draft report have been introduced with effect from the 1 January 2014. Whilst the eligibility being widened to include working groups is welcomed the other determinations increase the complexity of an already complex area. They will also lead to a lack of transparency and to different co-opted members being paid differently. Council is asked to agree that the Democracy & Governance Manager be the appropriate officer for the purposes of the determinations in paragraph 4(i) and (iii) of Appendix 1.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 For Council to agree or amend Appendix 2 as the Council's response to consultation on the draft annual report for 2014/15.
- 4.02 For the Democracy & Governance Manager to be the appropriate officer for the purposes of the determinations in paragraph 4 (i) and (iii) of the Appendix 1.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 The existing budget provision for Members' allowances should be sufficient to cover the proposals in the draft annual report for 2014.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 None as a result of this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.01 None as a result of this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.01 None as a result of this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.01 None as a result of this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

- 10.01 With the Constitution Committee.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

- 11.01 With the Constitution Committee, Chair of Constitution Committee and Council Leader.

12.00 APPENDICES

- 12.01 Appendix 1 - IRPW Supplementary Report
Appendix 2 - draft response to the IRPW

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Draft annual report for 2014.

Contact Officer: Peter Evans
Telephone: 01352 702304
Email: peter.j.evans@flintshire.gov.uk