

Supporting the work of local authority elected members

3.21 The Panel remains concerned that there has been wide variation and inconsistency of support provided to members. Some authorities made a flat rate payment; some provided IT equipment and consumables; some provided funded telephones/mobiles and/or tablets. Others made little or no provision, and in at least one instance a deduction was made from basic salary.

Insufficient support potentially undermines the ability of members to discharge their functions effectively.

3.22 The Panel expects that the support provided should take account of the specific needs of individual members. The functions of Democratic Services Committees include a requirement to review the level of support provided to members to carry out their duties and the Panel would expect these committees to carry this out and bring forward proposals to the full council as to what is considered to be reasonable.

3.23 The Panel has been requested to give additional guidance in relation to the level of basic IT provision for members of principal authorities. The Panel is of the view that it is necessary for each elected member to have ready use of telephone and e-mail services, and to have electronic access to appropriate information via an internet connection. This comprises the necessary provision for a member to be in proper contact with council services and to maintain contact with those they represent. Many councils in Wales are committed to 'paperless working' and without electronic access a member would be significantly limited in his or her ability to discharge their duties. As indicated above it is the responsibility of each council through its Democratic Services Committee to establish its provision of support based on an assessment of the needs of its members. It would not be appropriate for such facilities only to be available within council offices within office hours. When specific training, additional needs or matters of disability apply, each authority will need to assess any particular requirements of individual members.

Determination 6: The Panel has determined that each authority, through its Democratic Services Committee, must ensure that all its members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. All elected members should be provided with adequate telephone and email facilities and electronic access to appropriate information.

Determination 7: The Panel has determined that such support should be without cost to the individual member. Deductions must not be made from members' salaries by the respective authority as a contribution towards the cost of support which the authority has decided necessary for the effectiveness and/or efficiency of members.