

Subject: Independent Remuneration
Panel

Status: For Publication

Report to: Standards Committee

Date: 12th October 2006

Report of: Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Portfolio

Holder: Councillor Duncan Ruddick, Leader of the Council

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide information to the Committee about the constitution of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report are linked to and support the following corporate priorities:

*Embedding the Customer Promise
Financial Management*

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no specific risk issues for Members to consider arising from this report.

4. BACKGROUND/REASON FOR REPORT

- 4.1 The Committee will recall that, at its meeting on 22nd August 2006, it considered a report on its Work Programme for 2006/07. The Committee agreed a Programme, which included an item on considering and commenting upon the current Members' Allowances Scheme. At that meeting, the Committee also agreed that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be requested to provide information in respect of the Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel to the next meeting.

4.2 The Government White Papers of 1989 'Modern Local Government in Touch with the People' and 'Local Leadership, Local Choice' called for appropriate financial and other incentives to attract councillors who were more representative of the local community. In particular, they called for an end to the 'attendance culture' of some organisations. Regulations issued in 2001, following the implementation of the Local Government Act 2000, provided for the establishment of local Independent Remuneration Panels, in order to make recommendations on Members' Allowances Schemes.

4.3 An Independent Remuneration Panel must comprise at least three members, none of whom:-

- is also a member of an authority in respect of which it makes recommendations, or is a member of a committee or sub-committees of such an authority; or
- is disqualified from being or becoming a member of an authority.

4.4 Rossendale Borough Council set up a Panel in 2001, comprising three Members as follows:-

- Mrs G Oates (Chair), former Chief Executive of Oldham NHS Trust
- Mr V Hewitt, Chief Executive of Nest West Employers Organisation
- Mr N Davies, Area Officer, UNISON

That body considered and made recommendations in respect of an interim Scheme of Members Allowances, which was subsequently adopted by the Council in 2001.

4.5 In 2003 the Government introduced revised Regulations, which required the Council to further review its Scheme of Allowances. Under the latest Regulations, the Panel may make recommendations in respect of basic allowance, special responsibility allowance, dependent's carer allowance, travel and subsistence allowance, co-optees allowance, together with suspension of payments, provisions for backdating allowances and the use of an inflationary index. The authority is under a duty to publish the Panel's recommendations and to have regard to them when determining the Scheme before 1st April in each year.

4.6 The previous Panel was reformed and made recommendations in respect of a revised Scheme, which was then approved by the Council in December 2003. The Scheme was then amended on 31st March 2004 to take account of the introduction of pilot Executive Arrangements in Rossendale and again in April 2006 in response to the move to a permanent Cabinet model of governance.

4.7 In March 2006 a further Panel Member was appointed, in order to provide more flexibility in selecting dates for Panel meetings and to ensure that meetings were quorate. The new Panel member is Mr P Morris, a retired secondary school headteacher, who also has experience of Panels in other Lancashire authorities.

4.8 The Panel is in the process of reviewing the current Scheme with a view to making any recommendations in time to inform the budget process for 2007/08. The Democratic Services Manager facilitates meetings of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

5. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 N/A

6. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

6.1 There are no financial implications.

7. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

7.1 There are no Human Resources implications.

8. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

8.1 The Authority has a duty to establish an Independent Remuneration Panel in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and to publish and have regard to its recommendations.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Details of the four members of Rossendale's Independent Remuneration Panel are provided in the report for the information of the Committee.

10. RECOMMENDATION(S)

10.1 To note that report concerning the constitution of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

11. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

11.1 N/A

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Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Members' Allowances file held by the Democratic Services Manager	Futures Park, Bacup