

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

IN-YEAR REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES FOR 2008/09

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the meeting of the full Council on 13th October 2008, it was agreed that for a trial period until 30th April 2009 a new role of Shadow Portfolio Holder be created. The Council requested the Independent Remuneration Panel to consider an allowance for this role and for other recently-created Member Champion roles, for payment in the current financial year.
- 1.2 The Panel subsequently considered a report which detailed these requests at its meeting held on 3rd November 2008. Panel members were informed of the need to report back its recommendations to the next meeting of the Council on 12th November 2008.
- 1.3 During its deliberations the Panel was mindful of its previous recommendations with regard to Members' Allowances, the current Members' Allowances Scheme for 2008/09 and its review of Member' Allowances for the next financial year which is now underway.

2. Shadow Portfolio Holder

- 2.1 As the Shadow Portfolio Holder is a new role, the Panel found it difficult to evaluate this role due to the lack of detailed evidence and information as to what the nature of this role actually involves.
- 2.2 The Panel felt that the Shadow Portfolio Holder role seemed to involve some duplication given the creation of the new Overview and Scrutiny Boards and the existing roles of the Audit Board and the Leader of the Opposition.
- 2.4 The Panel does not therefore wish to make a recommendation at this point in time with regard to attaching a Special Responsibility Allowance to the role of Shadow Portfolio Holder.
- 2.5 However, as part of its review of allowances for next year, the Panel has asked to meet with Group Leaders (or their nominees) in the near future. The Panel proposes to take this opportunity to seek further information on the new role of Shadow Portfolio Holder and it will then re-consider whether it wishes to make any recommendation for the current year and beyond.
- 2.6 The Panel was mindful that the Shadow Portfolio Holder may incur out of pocket travelling expenses for activities which fall outside the list of "approved duties" within the current Council's Members' Allowances Scheme. The Panel therefore agreed to recommend that the list of "approved duties" be amended to address this.

3. **Member Champions**

- 3.1 As was the case with the new role of Shadow Portfolio Holder, the Panel also found it difficult to evaluate the role of Member Champions due to the lack of detailed evidence as to what the nature of these roles actually involves.
- 3.2 The Panel was not convinced that the role of Member Champion involves a *significant* degree of additional responsibility over and above the generally accepted duties of a councillor to warrant the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance. The Panel was mindful that there are currently seven Member Champions and is concerned to avoid a situation where the majority of councillors receive a Special Responsibility Allowance.
- 3.3 Government Guidance on the Members' Allowances Regulations emphasises the need to ensure that Special Responsibility Allowances relate to only *significant* additional responsibilities and that it does not necessarily follow that a particular responsibility which is vested to a particular councillor is a *significant* additional responsibility for which a Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid. Furthermore, the Guidance states that if the majority of members of a council receive such an allowance, the local electorate may rightly question whether this was justified.
- 3.4 The Panel was mindful that the Member Champions may incur out of pocket travelling expenses for activities which fall outside the list of "approved duties" within the current Council's Members' Allowances Scheme. The Panel therefore agreed to recommend that the list of "approved duties" be amended to address this.

4. **Recommendations**

In summary, the Panel recommends:

- (1) That no Special Responsibility Allowance be payable for the position of Shadow Portfolio Holder but the Council notes that this matter will be re-considered by the Panel following its forthcoming consultation meeting with Group Leaders (or their nominees).
- (2) That no Special Responsibility Allowance be payable to Member Champions.
- (3) That the list of "approved duties" within the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme for 2008/09 be amended to include the following:

"Attendance at meetings, site visits or events in the role of Shadow Portfolio Holder".
"Attendance at meetings, site visits or events in the role of Member Champion appointed by the Leader of the Council and where that role is formally recorded in the Council minutes".

Independent Remuneration Panel
3rd November 2008