

27 March 2018

Dear Assembly Member,

The Remuneration Board met on 15 March. The following is a summary of its discussions and decisions.

***Review of staffing support for Members***

The Board considered the evidence the review had received to date. The Board discussed what matters may warrant further consideration and what matters could be addressed sooner and as result has decided to consult on some issues immediately. Details of the consultation are noted in a [separate letter](#).

***Annual Review of the Determination 2018-19***

*Support staff salaries for 2018-19*

The Board agreed to increase support staff salaries for 2018-19 by 2.3 per cent in line with the provisional figures for change in median earnings in Wales, as measured by the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). The change will be implemented on 1 April 2018.

As set out in the Determination for the Fifth Assembly, the pay of Members and office holders is automatically adjusted each year by the change in median earnings in Wales, as measured by ASHE. Member and office holder salaries will increase from April, therefore, in the same way as support staff pay.

The Board noted the response received which raised concerns on the disparity in the salaries of support staff and Assembly Commission staff. The Board agreed to consider this issue as part of the review of staffing support for Members, taking into account comparable jobs in other legislatures and the public sector in Wales.

*Office cost allowance for 2018-19*

The Board agreed to increase the Office Costs Allowance for 2018-19 by 5 per cent. This in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate for September 2017 (3 per cent) and to address the additional cost demands which Members are expected to fund from their

budget, such as the caseworker software and the extended requirements of the Official Languages Scheme. The change will be implemented from 1 April 2018.

The Board noted the concerns raised in the consultation responses regarding the longer term pressures on the Office Costs Allowance as well as higher rental markets in certain parts of the country. Under the proposal to increase the ability to vire funds, Members would also have the ability to increase this allowance by viring any surplus funds from their staffing allowance, a figure capped at 25 per cent of the Office Costs Allowance. The Board agreed to reflect on the impact of these changes in its review of the Determination for the Sixth Assembly

The Board also agreed to offer an uncapped allowance which will be confined to the criteria<sup>1</sup> which is currently used to allow Members to implement security recommendations.

#### *Residential Accommodation Expenditure for 2018-19*

The Board agreed that the Residential Accommodation Expenditure for 2018-19 would remain at the current rates provided for in the Determination.

The Board noted the issues raised in relation to the index used for uprating the allowance as well as the how the boundaries for the allowance are defined. The Board will consider these issues further as part of its work for creating a Determination for the Sixth Assembly.

A revised Determination for 2018-19 will be published in due course.

#### ***Barriers to and the incentives for running for election to the Assembly***

The Board gave further consideration to the report by the Wales Governance Centre, who undertook the review on behalf of the Board. However, in light of ongoing industrial action affecting the WGC the discussions surrounding the publication arrangements for the report were postponed. The Board agreed to invite representatives from the WGC to its May meeting to discuss the next steps of the review.

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<sup>1</sup> That the security review is undertaken by trained security staff and recommendations are deemed as necessary (categorised as must and should for purposes of report) and two or more quotes are received for all work.

### **Other matters**

The Board noted the statement made by the Chair of the Standards of Conduct Committee in Plenary on 7 March 2018. The Board will to consider the implications of this work on the policies it is responsible for regarding support staff once this work is complete.

The Board considered how it would engage with both the Member and support staff Representative Groups in future and will write to members of those groups separately to outline its proposals.

The Board discussed its progress to date against the strategic priorities it set out in its strategy for 2016-2021. The Board agreed to publish a summary of its progress against these strategic priorities in its annual report for 2017-18.

The Board also considered its future work programme for the remainder of its term in office. It agreed to produce a more detailed plan for this work and to share details of this work in due course in order to keep Members and support staff informed.

This letter will also be published on our website as is our usual practice.

If you would like to discuss any matter with me, or with one of my fellow Board members, please do not hesitate to contact me via the secretariat.

Best wishes,



**Dame Dawn Primarolo**

**Chair, Remuneration Board**

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.