

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

22 January 2003

10.30am

PRESENT:

Mr Graham Sawell, Managing Director of Gravesham Chamber of Commerce
Mr Malcolm Bell, Principal of North West Kent College
Mr Malcolm Cooper, Industrial Chaplain

In Attendance:

Mrs Shirley Whatmough, Head of Democratic Services
Mr Mike Day, Principal Accountant

1. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

Panel Members received a copy of the current scheme of allowances which had been approved by the Council in April 2002, following the recommendations made by the Panel on 8 April 2002. The Panel also received details of allowances paid by other authorities in the South East in a schedule compiled by South East Employers. The Panel asked whether officers perceived that there were any problems in the operation of the scheme and it was confirmed that none had been identified. Mr Day also confirmed that there had been no call on the child care and dependent carers allowance during the year.

Mrs Whatmough reminded the Panel that the government was proposing to make new regulations concerning the payment of travel and subsistence allowances to elected members and also on the question of pensions but that there had been no change on this in the current year. It was possible that new regulations might come into force in the Spring.

The Panel felt that there were no grounds upon which to make any fundamental changes to the basic scheme for members' allowances. They agreed that some allowance should be made for inflation and asked Mr Day what the current inflation level was. Mr Day replied that inflation as at December 2002 was 2.7 per cent.

After some discussion the Panel proposed that the basic allowances be increased to the following:-

Basic members and special responsibility allowances (other than Vice-Chairs)	Increase to £2,630
Vice-Chairs allowance	Increase to £1,320
Leader's allowance	Increase to £28,920

This was a 2.7 per cent increase at all levels.

Since there had been no call on the child care and dependent carers allowance the Panel suggested that this remain unchanged.

The Panel noted the activities listed in appendix 2 of the scheme which identified those duties which were approved for the purposes of claiming travel and subsistence allowances.

2. PENSIONS

The Panel confirmed their previously stated view that the Leader's allowance should be pensionable if regulations were brought into force to make this possible. They took the view that this change could be implemented without any further reference to them.

3. TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE

The Panel agreed to meet again and consider any new regulations concerning a local scheme for travel and subsistence allowances for members, if and when, these were issued by central government.

4. PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Mrs Whatmough reminded the Panel that their terms of office expired in May 2003 and the Council's Constitution now included a protocol for appointment of Panel members in the future. The Council's Monitoring Officer would be consulting with various organisations on proposals for members of the new Panel which would then be considered by the Standards Committee prior to decision by the Full Council.

All three Panel members confirmed that they would be prepared to stand for a further term of office as Members of the Panel if the Council so wished.