

## Independent Remuneration Panel

Thursday, 16 June 2011

5.00pm

Ms Jeanette Campbell  
Rev Michael Fanstone  
Mr David Gingell

Boots  
Baptist Church  
Local Resident

Sarah Kilkie  
Sue Hill  
Stuart Bobby

Assistant Director (Communities)  
Committee & Elections Manager  
Service Manager (Financial Services)

### 1. Special Responsibility Allowances

The Panel was reminded that on 21 December 2010, the Council agreed that "due to the current financial situation affecting the Council and Gravesham Borough Council's staff having a pay freeze during the 2011/12 financial year that there be no increase to Members Allowances during 2011/12". Council also resolved at that time to adopt the new Leader and Cabinet style of Executive Governance with effect from 8 May 2011. This model places all executive functions and powers initially in the hands of one individual (the Leader).

Following the recent change in administration at the borough elections held on 5 May 2011, the Leader has laid out how he intends to operate the executive powers and functions. Under the new arrangements, each portfolio holder (Cabinet Member) will chair and be supported by a cross party "Cabinet Committee". These Cabinet Committees are new Committees which did not exist under the previous administration and they effectively take the place of the Policy Overview Committees (POCs).

In addition to these changes a separate Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee was also set up to take on the role previously undertaken by the Community Safety and Environment POC. The Lead Member of the new Cabinet Committee which may have undertaken this role attends meetings of the Community Safety Partnership is Vice-Chair of the community Safety Partnership Support Group and cannot oversee any scrutiny of the Partnership. No provision has been made in the proposals included in the agenda papers for a payment to be made to the Chair or Vice Chair of this Committee.

The panel was advised that Cllr Snelling (Leader of the Opposition) had suggested it would be useful for the Panel to interview him since he believed that the special responsibility allowances should continue to operate on a scale for different types of Chairs and Vice Chairs. Cllr Burden (Leader of the Council) had expressed the view that the allowances should be simplified and that the "transfer" of the previous POC Chairs allowance to the Vice-Chairs of the newly appointed Cabinet Committees reflected the level of work they would be expected to undertake in support of their Lead Members.

The Panel considered various options for distributing the allowance - all of which contained no increase in the basic Members' Allowance nor that payable to the Leader of the Executive and could be accommodated within existing budgetary provision.

The options included:-

- one which did not include a payment to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the newly appointed and separate Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee;

- one which paid a full Chair's allowance to the Chair of this new Committee with a consequential reduction in the rationalised Vice-Chairs allowance down to less than the Vice-Chair of the Overview Scrutiny Committee currently received, and
- one that provided for an allowance to be paid to the new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee (at reduced rates of £1,206 and £603) but also allowed the rationalised Vice-Chairs payment to remain at the current level of that for the Vice-Chair of Overview Scrutiny Committee e.g. £1,206 pa - 35 per cent of the standard Chairs allowance.

Whilst welcoming the offer of an interview with both Leaders, the Panel felt this would not be necessary as they could recall the reasoning behind their original recommendation to apportion the allowances but also understood the rationale now put forward by the Leader to make adjustments to the scheme and simplify the payments.

Members of the Panel said that they were surprised about the radical changes that had been made to the Council's governance arrangements and questioned how many other residents in the borough were actually aware of the changes. They acknowledged that although publicity may have been undertaken at the time it could not have been adequate as they, active members of the community in which they lived and worked, were not aware. The Panel requested that the Council's website be updated to include a detailed article on the changes and the arrangements now in place.

#### **Recommended that**

- there be no change made to the basic allowance payable to Members or the Special Responsibility Allowance payable to the Leader of the Executive;
- the Special Responsibility Allowances payable to Members of the Council for 2011/12 be as set out below:-

Leader of the Executive	£20,260
Deputy Leader of the Executive	£3,447
Leader of the Opposition	£3,447
Members of the Executive (excluding the Leader)	£3,447
Chair of the Regulatory Board	£3,447
Vice-Chair of the Regulatory Board	£1,206
Chair of the Overview Scrutiny Committee	£3,447
Vice-Chair of the Overview Scrutiny Committee	£1,206
Chair of Finance & Audit Committee	£3,447
Vice-Chair of Finance & Audit Committee	£1,206
Chair of the Licensing Committee	£3,447
Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee	£1,206
Vice-Chairs of Cabinet Committees	£1,206
Chair of the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee	£1,206
Vice-Chair of the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee	£603
Members - Basic Allowance	£3,447

#### **Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 5.45 pm.