

# LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

## Report of Panel on Members' Allowances

June 2009

### Introduction.

1. The Independent Panel on Members' Allowances was appointed by the Council to make recommendations on Members' Allowances in accordance with the relevant Regulations and the Government's statutory guidance. Gordon Tollefson has relinquished membership of the Panel following his appointment to the Council's Standards Committee. The Panel now consists of Sir Rodney Brooke CBE DL, Carolyn Lord and Matthew Knight.
2. The Panel issued its first report in May 1999. It updated its recommendations in October 2002 following new Government guidance. The Council adopted those recommendations with modifications. In subsequent reports the Panel has made further recommendations which again have been accepted, in some cases with modifications. A number of issues have now been referred to the Panel. They are set out below.

### Standards Committee

3. Since May 2008 the Standards Committee in Leeds has had (inter alia) the responsibility for the initial assessment of any complaint made about the conduct of Leeds City Councillors or Parish and Town Councillors in the Leeds area. The Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 require each standards committee to establish at least two sub-committees to carry out these functions. Both these committees (an Assessment Sub-Committee and a Review Sub-Committee) have a total membership of four, comprising
  - one independent member (who must chair)
  - two City Councillors
  - One Parish member (required when the relevant Sub-Committee is considering a complaint about a Parish or Town Councillor),

The quorum of the sub-committees is three.

4. In July 2008 the Independent Remuneration Panel made recommendations on the remuneration of the independent and Parish members of the Standards Committee, viz £7,098 for the Chair; £2,366 for the independent members; and £570 for the Parish members [figures adjusted after the annual updating]. The Panel also recommended that these allowances be reviewed after twelve months in order that a better assessment could be made of workloads in the light of experience. Since that report the Council (having regard to workload) has increased the number of independent members from two to four and the number of Parish members from two to three. At that time the Council's General Purposes Committee asked the Panel to review the level of remuneration payable to the Parish members of the Committee.

5. In 2008-09, 19 complaints were received and considered during nine separate Assessment Sub-Committee meetings. The Review Sub-Committee also considered five review requests in four separate meetings. During 2009-10 there will be a sub-committee scheduled every month in the Council's diary.
6. Although Parish members need be present only when an allegation about a Parish or Town Councillor is to be considered, the workload has necessitated the participation of Parish members in other cases. In eleven of the cases considered, a Parish member has been involved. As well as attendance at the meetings, sub-committee members must also comment on and approve decision notices as well as minutes of the meeting. They participate in the general work of the Standards Committee.
7. While the Panel believes that the allowances recommended for the independent members of the Standards Committee continue to be appropriate, it is clear that the workload of the Parish members exceeds that contemplated when allowances were recommended. Bearing in mind that (unlike the independent members) Parish members do not chair meetings, **the Panel believes that an appropriate co-optees' allowance for Parish members of the Standards Committee is £1,183**, ie half that paid to the independent members.

### **Travel Arrangements**

8. The Members' Allowances Scheme provides that the Councillors' basic allowance includes the cost of travelling and subsistence when undertaking Council business within the Leeds metropolitan area'. This sensible arrangements has many advantages.
9. On occasions it is necessary to co-ordinate travel arrangements for members and officers by arranging travel by mini-bus or taxi. In order to clarify matters, **we recommend that the Members' Allowances Scheme includes the following provision:**

**Where, for convenience, travel arrangements are made for joint visits by members by taxi or mini-bus, members who do not avail themselves of the travel arrangements should not be entitled to reimbursement of the cost of travel in the Leeds Metropolitan area.**

### **Annual Updating of Allowances**

10. The Members' Allowances Scheme makes provision for the annual updating of basic, special responsibility, co-optees' and dependants' (children) carers' allowances in line with the headline pay increase negotiated through the National Joint Committee for Local Government Employees; for the annual updating of dependants' (other than children) carers' allowances in line with the rate paid by the Department of Adult Services; and for the annual updating of travel and subsistence allowances in accordance with the rates claimable by officers.

11. In accordance with Regulation 10(5) of the Local Authority (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, **we recommend that updating in accordance with the Members' Allowances Scheme continue for a period of four years from the date of this report.**

#### **Summary of Recommendations**

- (a) the co-optees' allowance for Parish members of the Standards Committee should be £1,183;
- (b) the Members' Allowances Scheme should include the following provision:

**Where, for convenience, travel arrangements are made for joint visits by members by taxi or mini-bus, members who do not avail themselves of the travel arrangements should not be entitled to reimbursement of the cost of travel in the Leeds Metropolitan area.**

- (c) updating in accordance with the Members' Allowances Scheme continue for a period of four years from the date of this report.

**Rodney Brooke  
Matthew Knight  
Carolyn Lord**

**18 May 2009**