

6 June 2018

Dear Assembly Member,

The Remuneration Board met on 24 May. The following is a summary of its discussions and decisions.

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

The Board considered the responses it had received as part of its consultation on its proposals to increase the flexible use of the existing allowances within the Determination. The Board also considered the wider implications of making the changes, taking account of its duty to provide Members with adequate resources to enable them to undertake their role effectively while ensuring value for money and transparency in the use of public funds. The Board's decisions on each proposal is outlined below. Members may wish to note that these changes apply to an individual Member's allowances not the Support for Political Parties Allowance.

*Removal of 111 hour employment cap on permanently employed staff*

As all responses which referred to the proposal were in favour of the removal of the 111 hour employment cap on permanently employed staff, the Board agreed to implement the proposal.

The Board has decided to implement this decision effective of 1 October 2018. The Board noted that this implementation date should provide Members sufficient time to prepare for the change and consider how they may utilise the increased flexibility.

*Viring between budgets*

The Board considered the responses which referred to the increased ability to vire between the allowances. As all the responses were in favour of the proposal the Board agreed to allow Members to vire up to a total of 25 per cent from their Office Cost Allowance and/or the full value of their Policy, Communications and Research Fund (PRCF) into their Staffing Allowances, should they wish to do so.

The Board has decided to implement this decision effective 1 October 2018. As this change will take place halfway through the financial year, the amounts that would be permitted to

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be vired will be pro-rata this financial year. As such Members will be able to vire up to 12.5 per cent of their Office Costs Allowance and up to £1,250 of their PRCF allowance from 1 October 2018 to 31 March 2019.

### *Budgeting staffing at actual pay points*

All responses received on this issue welcomed the Board's proposals. As a result, the Board agreed to calculate the remaining balance available of the Staffing Allowance at actual cost rather than at total maximum staff cost as is the current practice.

The Board noted that appropriate systems would need to be put in place to assist Members to manage any budget volatility. As a result the Board has agreed that a suitable lead-in time is required and decided that this proposal will take effect as of 1 April 2019. This will allow for suitable support mechanisms to be put in place to support Members and their staff with the change.

### *Annual publication of Members total spend on staffing*

As all responses received on this issue agreed with the proposal, the Board agreed to implement the annual publication of Members total spend on staffing.

The Board noted the concerns raised by respondents who sought assurances that personal data of support staff would not be able to be identified from any published data. The Board agreed to implement safeguards to ensure that support staff could not be identified by the published information. This would include a total monetary value for the entire spend for each Member and not for each individual support staff.

The Board has decided to implement this decision effective immediately and the first data will be published at the end of current financial year in April 2019. This information will be published to the Assembly's website as is the current practice for other allowances.

### *Reviewing the changes*

The Board noted the concerns raised that the additional flexibility that was being provided by the Board's proposals may not meet the needs of all Members. The Board agreed with the respondents that the impact of these changes should be reviewed following implementation to assess Members' use and the effectiveness of the new flexibility. The Board will review the impact of the changes both six and 12 months after their implementation.

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## *Publication of the responses*

The Board agreed to publish a summary of the responses received in any output it may agree to produce at the end of the review.

## *Impacts of proposed changes on Political Party Support Allowances*

The Board considered the wider impacts of the changes it has agreed on the Political Party Support Allowance. The Board has agreed to consult on similar proposals for this allowance. The details of these proposals are noted in the [separate consultation letter](#).

## *Further consideration of evidence*

At its meeting in March the Board agreed to further consider some of the evidence it had received as part of its review of staffing support for Members. The Board agreed to return to these issues in due course.

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

The Board met with representatives of the Wales Governance Centre, who undertook the research on behalf of the Board. The Board discussed the report's content and considered how it may wish to approach some of the report's recommendations. The Board will consider the next steps of the review in collaboration with the Wales Governance Centre.

## ***Dignity and Respect Policy***

The Board noted that the National Assembly had voted to approve its new Dignity and Respect Policy. The Board agreed to work with both the Member and support staff representative groups to identify any changes to existing policies that it has responsibility for in light of the new Policy. The Board has also agreed that this work will consider the outcome of the Standards of Conduct Committee [inquiry](#) which expected before the summer recess. The Board will return to the issue at its July meeting.

## **Other matters**

The Board agreed to hold a drop-in session for Members during Plenary on 4 July. This will be an opportunity for Members to meet the Remuneration Board to discuss any issues or matters arising. Further information will be circulated to Members in due course.

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

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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.