

**Independent Remuneration Panel -
Adoption Panel, Fostering Panel and Group Leaders**

Report to the Constitution Committee on 7 October 2013

1 Background

- 1.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) met on 12 July 2013 to consider the level of Special Responsibility Allowances for members of the Adoption Panel and the Fostering Panel. During the term of the last Council, one member served on the Adoption Panel but the new Council has indicated that two members will be appointed. Historically, no allowance has been paid to the member serving on the Fostering Panel but a request has been made for this to be reviewed.
- 1.2 The Panel also considered the number of members required in a political group for the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowances for the Group Leader. The present number is four members but, following the May 2013 election, there are two political groups with just three members.

2 Adoption Panel

- 2.1 The IRP received detailed information on the role and membership of the Panel. Its workload is increasing with a rise in the number of cases, particularly in the 0-4 age range. There is no longer a requirement for an elected member to sit on the Panel but their life skills and knowledge is still thought to be of significant value. Having member representation also promotes a better understanding of the complexity of the issues faced amongst the wider membership of the Council.
- 2.2 The new Council has indicated that two members will be appointed to share the workload of the Panel. They will undertake the same training and go through the same checking processes as other members of the Panel.
- 2.3 The IRP recognise that the appointment of two members will provide greater resilience but would not wish to see the role split between more than two members. It is suggested that the current level of Special Responsibility Allowance of £11,703 is divided equally between the two members appointed, resulting in an allowance of £5,852 each.
- 2.4 The IRP wishes to place on record its thanks to former councillor, Joan Nash, who served as an elected member on the Adoption Panel for a number of years.

3 Fostering Panel

- 3.1 The Fostering Panel meets less often than the Adoption Panel but nonetheless provides a vitally important role in meeting the needs of 'looked after children'. The

IRP recognise that the safety and wellbeing of looked after children is dependent on selecting the right people to look after them.

- 3.2 Historically the member sitting on the Panel has not received an allowance but the IRP believe that in the interests of equity and fairness the member should receive the same level of allowance (£5,852) as the two members of the Adoption Panel. With the membership of the Adoption Panel split between two members, the number of meetings attended by the member of the Fostering Panel will broadly be similar.

4 Group Leaders

- 4.1 Following the May 2013 election, the Independent Group and UKIP Group each have three members. The qualifying number of members for a Group Leader's allowance of £5,808 is four.
- 4.2 The Leader of the Independent Group attended the meeting to provide details of his role. He stated that the no overall control position of the new Council meant that he was much more closely involved in the daily operations of the Council. He said that this extended to more than regular attendance at Group Leaders' meetings and briefings for full Council. He noted that the three main political groups were supported by Political Research Assistants but this type of support was not available to the smaller groups.
- 4.3 The IRP was not supportive of reducing the number of qualifying members from four to three at the present time but they undertook to review the position in the Autumn when a wider review of the allowances scheme would be undertaken.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 That a Special Responsibility Allowance of £5,852 should be paid to each of the two members of the Adoption Panel. The allowances to be payable from the date of appointment by Council.
- 5.2 That a Special Responsibility Allowance of £5,852 should be paid to the member appointed to the Fostering Panel (effective from the date of appointment on 15 May 2013).
- 5.3 That the Council should not reduce the qualifying number of members for a Political Group Leader's allowance from four to three.

William Alexander
Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel

12 July 2013