



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales meeting: 24 May 2023

Summary of the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2023.

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Contents

Attendees

Introduction

Actions and secretariat updates

Any other business

Next meeting

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Attendees

Frances Duffy, Chair
Saz Willey, Vice Chair
Bev Smith, Member
Leighton Jones, Secretariat
Sara Rees, Secretariat
Dianne Bevan, New Panel Member (Observer)
Kathryn Watkins, New Panel Member (Observer)

Introduction

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (the Panel) met on Wednesday 24 May.

The aim of the meeting was to:

- review and agree April meeting notes (full and summary), note actions and Secretariat updates
- update 2023 to 2024 workplan and budget
- consider Evidence and Research Strategy and Communications Plan
- discuss any other business

This was the first meeting that was attended by the newest members of the Panel, Kathryn Watkins and Dianne Bevan.

Below summarises the Panel's discussions and decisions.

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Actions and secretariat updates

The Panel agreed the minutes from the April meeting, noting going forward, summaries, should have a lighter touch and more of a newsletter as opposed to a formal document.

The Panel noted the budget sheet as discussed.

Following the Panel's April meeting, the Panel agreed to ensure compliance with Welsh Government Accessibility Policy. This includes ensuring documents for Panel meetings are fully accessible.

Community Town Councils Taxation

The Panel notes that there are still some community councils querying how to apply PAYE rules to payments made to members. This matter was discussed with One Voice Wales (OVW) and Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC) at the Panel's April meeting, where OVW and SLCC were advised to refer to HMRC guidance and claim allowance.

The Panel is liaising with the Welsh Treasury to consider addressing the matter with HMRC.

Community Town Council Remuneration returns

Community and Town Councils are legally required to publish, within their authority area, the remuneration received by their members by 30 September following the end of the previous financial year. This information must also be sent to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales by the same date.

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The Wales Audit Office informed all Community Town Councils (CTCs), statements of allowances for CTC members should be submitted to IRPW Secretariat by September 2023. As a result, the Panel noted an increase in volume of returns ahead of the September.

Independent Remuneration Panel interactions with Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) and National Parks Authorities' (NPA)

In May, the Panel Chair met with Welsh Government officials to discuss diversity of representation and a perceived barrier to senior councillors taking up posts on the Authorities because of the rules against double remuneration.

The Panel noted that this issue had been reviewed relatively recently, and the Panel remains of the view that, as the salaries of senior councillors are based on an assumption of working full time, it would not be appropriate to remunerate them twice from the public purse. The Panel's position on not double paying senior members is fair and correct. This is line with Welsh Government policy. For example, members of Health Boards are not paid if their full-time employment is publicly funded.

The Panel noted payments for FRA and NPA members are linked to the Principal Basic. The average time commitment of National Park and Fire and Rescue authority members is 44 and 22 days respectively. A review of the time commitment, senior payments, and the link to the Basic should be completed ahead of or by AR2027.

Communication and engagement

The Panel agreed to sign off the Communication and Engagement Plan at the

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June meeting.

Once this has been agreed, the Communication and Engagement Plan, will be published on the Panel's website.

Research and evidence

The Panel discussed a paper presented by a member of the Panel. This paper provided options for determining the allowances of principal council members and agreed to add payments to Scottish Local Government elected members to the set of comparators and benchmarks it uses to decide whether or not to use annual survey of hours and earnings (ASHE) for 2024 to 2025 determinations.

Senior members allowance determinations

The Panel noted, in the current model, a leader of a Band A Principal Authority is paid 3.75 times ASHE. All other senior roles are weighted multipliers and set differentials. These have been periodically benchmarked against other senior salaries and differentials. The last full review was in 2021 to inform the Annual Report 2022.

The Panel proposed no amendment to the 3.75 rate, agreeing to review complexity of roles and working hours. The Panel will add questions regarding senior roles on the Commission's next survey, to be issued in June.

The Panel agreed to consider undertaking a desktop review of alternatives measures when contemplating a full external evaluation of senior roles, including time commitment, responsibility, and market reward level.

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Payments to co-opted members of Principal Councils

The Panel is responsible for agreeing payment options for co-opted members of principal councils, national parks authorities and fire and rescue authorities and will debate current arrangements and feedback received during the 2023 draft annual report consultation period and options for the next year, at the next meeting.

Travel

The Panel agreed to consider local authority promotion and delivery of the green agenda. Topic to be included in Panel's next consultation.

Member social security payments

The Panel acknowledge the issue of payments on members social security benefits is not a devolved area and is complex. The Panel has agreed it needs to gain better understanding by accessing specialist knowledge and possibly basic training on this matter. The Panel suggested SLCC should also be offered training from Department of Work and Pensions to better inform CTC members.

Community and Town Councils payments (CTCs)

The Panel has a separate framework for CTC payments. This mainly aims to ensure members are repaid for the costs they have whilst carrying out their duties. Members with additional responsibilities are entitled to a senior payment.

The Panel noted at the [Councillor remuneration and citizen engagement in](#)

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Wales engagement sessions One Voice Wales highlighted the average work commitment of CTC members is 1 day a month, questioning if this should be reflected in the CTC payment and whether the payment should also be linked to ASHE, or any legacy indicator.

The Panel acknowledged this is worthy of investigation. Due to complexity, the Panel agreed further research would need to see how a proposal would be funded and that this is unlikely to be addressed before the 2027 elections.

Any other business

The Panel discussed and agreed replies to 8 queries that had been received 5 from Community and Town Councils and 3 from Principal Councils through the Secretariat. These queries asked the Panel for advice and clarification relating to processing of payments to Councillors. The Panel's FAQ will be updated to clarify wording in relation to specific queries.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales will take place on Tuesday 20 June, where the Panel will finalise their communications and engagement strategy, discuss co-opting members and review the Panel's risk register.

Representatives from 3 local authorities have been invited to attend the meeting to discuss the process of paying co-opted members.

Should you have any matters you wish to raise with the Panel, please do not hesitate to get in touch via the Secretariat by emailing IRPMailbox@gov.wales.

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