

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEMBERS' REMUNERATION PANEL MEETING HELD ON 20 DECEMBER 2006 AT SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE HALL AT 09:30

Present: John Bridge (Chairman of Cambridge Chamber of Commerce)
Valerie, Lady Bright (Magistrate and Business owner)
Ruth Rogers (Deputy Chief Executive, Age Concern)
Maggie Jennings, Democratic Services Officer

In attendance by invitation:

Cllr John Batchelor – Spokesperson for the Lib/Dems
Cllr Roger Hall – Spokesperson for the Conservatives, Vice-Chairman of Scrutiny & Overview Committee and Licensing Committee
Cllr Mrs Cicely Murfitt – Chairman of the Council

1. Election of Chairman

- 1.1 It was agreed that Ruth Rogers be elected Chairman of the meeting.

2. Order of Business

- 2.1 The Panel were requested in particular, to consider the following items:
- (a) At the request of the Licensing Committee Chairman, that there be a reduction in the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)
 - (b) To consider the SRA for Portfolio Holders as the number was reduced from 8 to 7 in May this year as one Portfolio Holder had taken on the responsibility of two areas
 - (c) At the request of Dave Kellaway to review the allowance for Parish Members on the Standards Committee
 - (d) Payment of a SRA to the Leader of the Opposition
 - (e) To note the comparative figures of the Daventry Benchmarking Group

3. Discussion with Cllr Mrs Cicely Murfitt

- 3.1 Cllr Mrs Murfitt informed the Panel:
- That it would not be political to raise the allowances due to the financial situation of the Council
 - Allowances should be paid to only those that have additional duties
 - She agreed with the reduction of the SRA for the Chairman of Licensing Committee as there had not been the number of hearings anticipated and it was not expected that there would be many hearings as a result of the Gambling Act

- Many Councillors attend their own Parish Council meetings; some have more than one Parish meeting to attend, Mrs Murifft does not claim expenses for attending those meetings
- The Chairman's allowance did not cover all her expenses, particularly in respect of appropriate dresswear for Council functions, nor to host an annual reception for dignitaries from the surrounding area
- There was a need to attract people with experience to become Councillors and in particular the younger element; she did however recognise that it was difficult to combine working and Council duties
- She was on-call 24-7
- The difference in allowances for Parish and Independent members of the Standards Committee appeared an anomaly
- That these were her own personal views

4. Discussion with Cllr John Batchelor

4.1 Cllr Batchelor informed the Panel:

- That the Lib/Dems had withdrawn from Cabinet as seats had been lost at the last election that were gained by the Conservatives and it was felt that during consideration of Council matters some Independents would vote with the Conservatives and the Lib/Dems wanted evidence of that. Cllr Batchelor also alleged an underhand election campaign against his party
- That the Council had recently agreed not to include in the Council's constitution recognition of an opposition party, however he felt that a responsible opposition should be recognised with a Special Responsibility Allowance
- That when Cllr David Bard steps down as Leader of the Council in January, although he would remain responsible for planning growth areas, he would not have the duties as in his previous role
- He felt that Independent and Parish members of the Standards Committee should receive the same allowance

5. Discussion with Cllr Roger Hall

5.1 Cllr Hall informed the Panel:

- That as the number of Portfolio Holders would be reviewed in the near future, a change in the SRA be considered at that time
- That an increase in the Basic Allowance be on a par with the increase received by officers of the Council, ie approximately 2.5%
- He had no view on the allowances for Standards Committee, as he hoped that there would be fewer meetings in the future
- The reduction in the SRA for the Licensing Chairman should be reviewed once the Gambling Act was enforced
- That travel allowances should remain the same

6. Conclusions of the Panel

6.1 The Panel agreed,

- (a) That there be a 2.5% increase in the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances
- (b) The SRA for Chairman of the Licensing Committee be reduced to £2,100

- (c) The Parish Member allowance for Standards Committee be raised to £262 in line with the Independent Member, plus a 2.5% increase as stated in (a) above
 - (d) That there be no change in Dependents' Carers' Allowances, Travel Allowances, Subsistence Allowances and Overnight Subsistence. NB Members would be expected to exercise prudence when booking hotel accommodation
 - (e) That it was inappropriate to pay a SRA in respect of Leader of the Opposition when the position was not recognised by the Council's Constitution
 - (f) There be no change in the SRA paid to Portfolio Holders
- 6.2 The information relating to the Daventry Benchmarking Group Comparison figures was noted by the Panel.

The meeting closed at 11.20am

(Subsequent to the meeting, additional information regarding the difference in payment to Independent and Parish members of the Standards Committee in 2006/07 was considered by the Panel and in light of that information, the Panel agreed that the difference of £52.00 on the 2006/07 allowance should remain with an increase of 2.5% in respect of the 2007/08 allowance. These figures are reflected in the table)