

Report to: Standards Committee

Date of Meeting: 2 March 2018

Lead Officer: Gary Williams (Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services)

Report Author: Steve Price (Democratic Services Manager)

Title: Remuneration for Lay Members

1. What is the report about?

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) publishes an annual report on the level of payments and support to co-opted and lay members each year. The IRPW recently invited co-opted and lay members to discuss the national scheme of payments. This report contains information on the national scheme operated by Denbighshire County Council and in particular its application to lay and co-opted members of the Council's committees.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

On the 22 September the Standards Committee requested that a report on lay-member remuneration and responsibilities be considered at the committee's December meeting. The Standards Committee membership includes lay members.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the committee considers the information and issues in this report.

4. Report details

- 4.1 In September the IRPW visited Denbighshire as part of a programme of visits to all the unitary authorities. The IRPW sets out the framework which authorities have to comply with when making payments to elected members and lay or co-opted members of committees. As outlined in the September minutes of the Standards Committee the IRPW delegation had discussed the remuneration scheme's operation in Denbighshire with one of the lay-members of the Standards Committee. As a result the Standards Committee had requested clarification about which duties would be eligible for a payment and whether the Council limited claims to the equivalent of 10 days per year per claimant.
- 4.2 Co-opted or lay members with voting rights are entitled to claim a £198 daily fee for attending meetings or other authorised events, or a fee of £99 for half day meetings or events. Fees for the co-opted chair of the Standards Committee are £256 per day or £128 for a half day. The IRPW defines a half day as being up to 4 hours and a full day as being over 4 hours and has stipulated that reasonable time spent on preparation and travel time can be included. The extent of pre-meeting preparation

time allowed may be determined by the Democratic Services Manager. Appendix 1 is an excerpt from the IRPWs draft annual report relating to lay and co-opted members.

4.3 The authorised meetings and events eligible to receive an attendance allowance are:

- Formal meetings of the committee on which the claimant is a voting member.

For Standards Committee members these are the formal meetings of the Standards Committee.

Denbighshire County Council also has other co-optees including education scrutiny committee voting co-optees who are entitled to payments for attending meetings that consider education issues. For those meetings the co-optees' names would be included in the membership section of the agenda. Payments would not be made for attending Scrutiny meetings or agenda items that were not considering education business.

- Training events, conferences, regional or sub-regional meetings where a lay-member's attendance has been requested and therefore authorised by the Council.
- Official pre-meeting briefings with the committee or officers to discuss the committee's business.
- Attendance on behalf of the Council at the North Wales Standards Committee Forum.

4.4 Local authorities can decide on the maximum number of days for which lay or co-opted members may be paid in any one year. Denbighshire County Council has decided not to impose a maximum number at this time.

4.5 As shown in paragraph 4.3 there are a range of events and activities that can be included in claims. A formal invitation to a lay-member of a committee to attend a meeting at which they will be a voting member indicates that their attendance is authorised and a payment can be claimed for the time taken. Similarly, a request to attend other meetings, briefings or events, where the request has been made by an appropriate officer of the Council, will normally signify that a claim will be met.

4.6 As mentioned earlier in this report the IRPW recently visited Denbighshire and met with a member of the Standards Committee. The invitation to attend was extended by the Council through its Democratic Services team for lay and co-opted members to meet the IRPW. By attending the meeting they would be eligible to claim either a half or full day payment depending on the time commitment involved.

4.7 One of the duties that Standards Committee members have decided upon is attending meetings of the city, town and community councils (CTCCs) and reporting on their impressions to the Standards Committee. These visits are intended to assist the CTCCs and raise their standards by identifying any problems or training requirements and sharing good practices. However, the CTCCs remain separate organisations, independent of the county council and the visits are not currently authorised for the payment of claims, which would otherwise fall to the County

Council to meet. The IRPW itself highlights that affordability is an issue for both councils and the tax payer and (for elected members) it recognises that there is an unpaid public service contribution in undertaking the role, whilst the Council does not itself require or organise the visits.

- 4.8 In the event of any uncertainty the Monitoring Officer or the Democratic Services Manager will be able to confirm whether specific meetings or activities would be eligible for a payment.
- 4.9 Travel costs for authorised meetings and events are also met by the Council and these are paid at the current HM Revenue and Customs rate which for travel by car is reimbursed at 45 pence per mile.
- 4.10 The following link can be used to view the IRPWs draft determinations for the 2018 – 2019 municipal year:

<http://gov.wales/irpwsb/home/publication-reports/financial-year-2018-19/?skip=1&lang=en>

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

No direct contribution.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

Any increases in payments to lay members would have to be met from the Council's budgets.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

An impact assessment is not required for this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Responding to the consultation by the IRPW is a function of the Democratic Services Committee and that committee considered the draft IRPW report on the 20 October 2017. Full Council is expected to consider the final version of the IRPWs report and the views or recommendations from the Standards Committee can be presented as part of that discussion.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not required.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

The IRPW has authority to set the level of payments and guiding framework for lay and co-opted members. There are no risks identified with the matters raised in this report.

11. Power to make the Decision

Section 111 Local Government Act 1972

Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011