

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES
Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel
to Oxfordshire County Council, November 2012

Introduction

1. The Local Government Act 2000 provides that before the Council makes or amends its scheme of allowances, the Council is required to take into account the advice of its duly appointed Independent Remuneration Panel on the levels and types of allowances to be paid under that scheme.
2. The Panel were requested to consider:
 - whether a Special Responsibility Allowance should be payable to the County Council's representative on the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel;
 - whether a Special Responsibility Allowance should be payable for the County Council's representative as he had been appointed Vice-Chairman of the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel;
 - the level of Special Responsibility Allowance(s)
3. Our conclusions (set out in more detail below) are:
 - A Special Responsibility Allowance of £1,500 should be paid to the Council's representative on the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel
 - A Special Responsibility Allowance of £3,000 should be paid to the Council's representative as the Vice-Chairman of the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel
 - These arrangements to be reviewed within six months once the new Police & Crime Commissioner and Panel arrangements have been in operation for several months

The Panel's proceedings

4. The Independent Remuneration Panel:
 - Ms Jenny Armitstead – the Voluntary Sector
 - Mr Ian Barry – the Not-for-Profit Sector
 - Mrs Olga Senior – the Public Sector
5. Sources of information used were:
 - Information on the role, responsibilities, powers and funding of a Police & Crime Panel
 - Questionnaire response provided by the Council's representative on the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel
 - The Panel Arrangements and Rules of Procedure documents of the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel
 - Agenda and minutes of the Joint Committee which set-up the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel and the first meetings of the Panel
 - Report of Buckinghamshire County Council's Independent Remuneration Panel.

Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

6. All principal authorities in the Thames Valley have a new statutory responsibility to establish a Police and Crime Panel under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. In the Thames Valley an agreement has been reached by the 18 local authorities across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire on the set-up arrangements for the joint committee – the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel.
7. The statutory responsibilities of a Police & Crime Panel:
 - Reviewing and making recommendations on the draft Police and Crime Plan
 - Scrutinising the Police & Crime Commissioner, inviting the Chief Constable to attend before the Police & Crime Panel where appropriate
 - Reviewing the Police & Crime Commissioner's appointment of Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner where one is appointed
 - Making reports and recommendations on matters relating to the Police & Crime Commissioner
 - Monitoring all complaints against the Police & Crime Commissioner and the informal resolution of such complaints where necessary
 - Questioning the Police & Crime Commissioner on the annual report in a public meeting; and review and make recommendations on the annual report
 - Exercising veto powers on the Police & Crime Commissioner's proposed annual council tax precept and appointment of Chief Constable.
8. The Police & Crime Panel's role is to review and scrutinise and to act as an influencer. However, it does have teeth to hold the Commissioner to account and has powers to veto. The influencing role is crucial in terms of developing relationships with the Commissioner and key partners.
9. As the Panel has a scrutiny function its purpose is to:
 - Provide a check and balance on the work of the Commissioner
 - To enhance public accountability and transparency.
10. The process for setting up the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel was overseen by a Joint Committee of one councillor from each of the 18 local authorities in the Thames Valley, with Buckinghamshire County Council coordinating as the "host authority".
11. On 19 July 2012 the first formal meeting of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel was held. The first item of business was to appoint a Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Panel: the Buckinghamshire County Council representative was elected as Chairman, and the Oxfordshire County Council representative was appointed Vice-Chairman. These appointments will be made annually.
12. The joint committee setting up the Panel agreed that no allowances should be paid to members of the Panel from the funding provided by the Home Office. It was up to each Authority whether they gave a Special Responsibility Allowance for their representative on the Panel.

Special Responsibility Allowance: Council's representative on the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

13. We consider that the Police & Crime Panel has a crucial role under the new policing arrangements in scrutinising the new Commissioner for the Thames Valley area. It will have a significant workload in carrying out its responsibilities. Therefore we consider that a Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid to the Council's representative on the Panel.
14. When considering the level of allowance, we note that Buckinghamshire County Council has agreed to set an allowance of £1,500 which corresponds with the allowance paid to Buckinghamshire's scrutiny members serving on the Buckinghamshire County Council's Overview and Commissioning Committee. We agree that there is a clear rationale for linking the allowances payable for the Police and Crime Panel to those payable to scrutiny committees of the Oxfordshire County Council, while acknowledging that the functions and scope are different.
15. However, under Oxfordshire's Members' Allowances Scheme, there is no equivalent role. So we have considered the responsibilities and likely time commitments involved in representing Oxfordshire County Council on the Police and Crime Panel and recommend that an allowance of £1,500 is appropriate to remunerate the Council's representative.

Special Responsibility Allowance: the Council's representative appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

16. As the County Council's representative has been appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel, we have looked at the likely role and responsibilities of being Vice-Chairman. We acknowledge that this role covers the Thames Valley area and so there is a need for the Vice-Chairman to be briefed and aware of the matters for the whole of the Thames Valley and not just Oxfordshire. Therefore we consider that a special responsibility allowance should be paid to the Council's representative in their role as Vice-Chairman of the Panel.
17. We note that Buckinghamshire has set an allowance of £10,092 for its representative who has been appointed Chairman of the Panel, which corresponds with the allowance paid to Buckinghamshire's Chairman of an Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
18. Under Oxfordshire County Council's allowances scheme, there is no allowance for a deputy chairman of a scrutiny committee. We acknowledge that the Vice-Chairman of the Panel will need to be able to act on behalf of the Chairman in his absence but we do not consider that the Vice-Chairman has the same level of responsibility as the Chairman of the Panel. In considering the level of allowance we have taken into account the allowance set for a Scrutiny Committee Chairman under the Council's Scheme, which is £5,000. While this is a useful benchmark it is not a direct parallel especially in these early days in the life of the Panel.

Therefore, taking account of the role, responsibilities and likely time commitments for this Vice-Chairman role we recommend an allowance of £3,000 which is double our recommended allowance as a member of the Police & Crime Panel.

Review of these allowances

19. As the Police & Crime Commissioner has just been appointed and the Police & Crime Panel has only met twice we would wish to review these special responsibilities within six months, once the new arrangements have been in operation for a few months and further evidence is available as to the role and responsibility considered by this report.

Recommendations

20. We therefore recommend that:

- A Special Responsibility Allowance of £1,500 be paid to the Council's representative on the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel
- A Special Responsibility Allowance of £3,000 be paid to the Council's representative as the Vice-Chairman of the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel
- We review these arrangements within six months.

Mrs Olga Senior

Chairman

Independent Remuneration Panel for Oxfordshire County Council