

## Notes of Informal Meeting held on 19 December 2007

**Present:** S Lye, D Jackman (Independent Remuneration Panel Members)  
Councillor P House (Leader of LRA Group)  
I Willett, G Lunnun

- Councillor P House outlined his background in business. When first nominated to stand for election he had been unaware of any remuneration for Councillors.
- He now considered EFDC members vastly underpaid.
- He expressed concerns about the age balance on the Council/the male/ female balance/the lack of a wide socio-economic spread. He said revising the allowances was the key to addressing these issues. He said some Councillors refused to take allowances as they saw their duty as a charitable function. He had not seen much change in this approach during the last six years.
- He favoured a basic allowance of approximately £5,000 per annum.
- He pointed out the Leader's position was virtually full-time and the current allowance was derisory.
- He was Chairman of the Staff Appeals Panel and, although there had been a period of three years without a meeting, in recent months three meetings had been held. As Chairman, there was a need to be impartial and fair and to read all the documents carefully beforehand in order to issue guidance to others as necessary. He likened it to an Employment Tribunal. He confirmed members had HR and Legal Officers to assist them. He confirmed that training was necessary. There was a need to have knowledge of the relevant protocols/procedures. He felt members of the Panel needed to take more care and be more disciplined than members of other committees since the Panel was concerned with issues such as ethnicity and gender whilst generally other committees needed to apply a degree of common sense only to their decision-making.
- He drew attention to other duties falling on Chairmen - liaising with Directors, Portfolio Holders, Vice-Chairman and others prior to meetings. He suggested the ideal profile for a Councillor candidate was, young/own boss/working from home or young women/parent with part-time job looking to do something more satisfying.
- He was not aware of his Group having 'lost' any potential candidates due to the current levels of remuneration. LRA candidates tended to come from more of a community base than other groups. He said it was possible the Group had retained some Councillors because of remuneration.
- He felt Cabinet members should receive different levels of remuneration. The Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder was responsible for approximately half of the Council's budget and a third of staff. He was not familiar with the work of all of the Portfolio Holders. Budgets and employees were quantitative measures which could judge the differences with some evaluation of workload, e.g. Cabinet reports, Portfolio Holder decisions.
- He felt there should be a base payment for Group Leaders as some of their duties did not vary accord to the number of members in a Group. The LRA did not have internal disciplinary structures like other Groups. There were monthly executive meetings at which issues were discussed. The views expressed were not binding on Council members. He did not consider the role of Group Leaders had changed since

the Conservative Group had taken overall control of the Council. It was up to a Leader to decide how much communication there was with members of the Group.

- In summary, he felt his Group considered the amounts of the current allowances derisory and that by increasing them the electorate would be given a wider choice of candidate. He felt that attendance at meetings should have some impact on the level of the basic allowance and accepted there would always be a degree of inequality between members.