

**CRAWLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL****Minutes of Members' Allowances Independent Review Panel****23 June 2009**

**Present:-** Liz Lamport (CCVS)  
Roy Rose (CADIA)  
Alison Skinner (South East Coast SHA)  
Nick Whitley (Central Sussex College)

**Also present:-**  
Ann Maria Brown (Head of Legal and Democratic Services)  
Julie Green (Principal Democratic Services Officer)  
who were present at the meeting but not during the interviews.

**Apology for absence:-**  
Steve Rham (Crawley and Gatwick Chamber of Commerce)

**1. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2009**

These were agreed as a correct record of the proceedings.

**2. Interviews**

Members were informed that the Council had agreed the General Purposes Committee's recommendation to approve the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2009/10 as proposed by the Panel.

However, in making this recommendation, the Panel had been asked to re-convene in order to reconsider the recommendation regarding the special responsibility allowances for the Vice-Chairs of the Development Control Committee and the Licensing Committee, with a special request to consider whether these special responsibility allowances should be reinstated at the same level as that for the Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

In doing so, the Panel had been asked to interview the holders of those two posts for 2008/09 as part of its consideration of the matter. The General Purposes Committee had also indicated that it would seem appropriate for the Panel also to interview the Chairs of the Development Control and Licensing Committees and the Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

The Panel recalled that their previous recommendation not to include a special responsibility allowance in the scheme for the Licensing Vice Chair had been based on the fact that the expected increase in workload had not continued at the higher level experienced at the time of the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003. Since the introduction of a special responsibility allowance for the Vice Chair of Development Control had been based on the strong parallels which existed between the two posts, the Panel had not felt it

appropriate to include a special responsibility allowance for this post in the 2009/10 scheme either.

The Panel went on to interview the following members, as requested by the General Purposes Committee:-

Councillor Lucy Brockwell (former Chair of the Licensing Committee)  
Councillor Keith Brockwell (Vice Chair of the Development Control Committee)  
Councillor Nigel Boxall (former Chair of the Development Control Committee)  
Councillor Jarnail Singh (Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee)  
Councillor Gordon Seekings (Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission).

A schedule setting out the allowances for each of these posts for 2008/09 and 2009/10 was circulated for the information of the Panel. Also circulated with the agenda were profiles of each of the councillors interviewed.

### **3. Outcome of the Interviews**

As part of the last review, the Panel had acknowledged that the Chair and the Vice Chair of both the Development Control and Licensing Committees required a high standard of chairing skills, that both committees were technically complex and that good background knowledge was needed to enable the postholders to undertake their roles.

However, as part of this latest interview process, the Panel focussed on three areas of activity with regard to each Committee:-

Statutory responsibility  
Consequences for the Council of making a poor decision (in terms of costs on appeal or public relations)  
Workload (in terms of number of meetings, timescale and process)

In the course of the interviews, the Panel had been persuaded that, given that all three of the above criteria applied to the Development Control Committee which met on a two/three weekly basis, the responsibilities of the Vice Chair of that Committee were sufficient to warrant a special responsibility allowance.

It was felt that the Licensing Committee also met the first two criteria. However, the workload had currently diminished to the extent that the responsibilities of the Vice Chair did not appear to be on a par with those of the Development Control Chair.

On the other hand, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission had no decision making powers but a very significant workload and, in the light of this, the Vice Chair of the Commission currently received a special responsibility allowance. Therefore, it was felt that perhaps parallels could be drawn between this post and that of the Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee.

The interviewees were invited back into the room (although Councillor Singh had left by this stage) and asked to give their views on the initial conclusions of the Panel.

Generally, the interviewees concurred with the initial conclusions reached by the Panel. The point was made that the workload of the Development Control Committee could, in future, be impacted by the recession. However, there appeared to be no evidence of this being the case at the present time.

The Panel thanked the councillors for giving up their time to attend the interviews and for their input.

#### **4. Formulation of recommendations**

On the basis of further information provided during the interview process, the subsequent discussions which had taken place as set out above, and the careful consideration given by the Panel of those roles, the Panel decided to recommend the General Purposes Committee that special responsibility allowances be paid as follows, and that these allowances be backdated to 1 April 2009:-

Post	Special Responsibility Allowance
Vice Chair of the Development Control Committee	£ 2380 (2008/09 allowance uplifted by 2%)
Vice Chair of Licensing Committee	£1166 (Same as the allowance for the Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission)

The Panel also decided to review these allowances as part of the 2010/11 review process.

#### **5. Allowance for Lead Members on a Scrutiny Review**

The 2009/2010 Members' Allowance Scheme provided for an allowance of £1133 to be paid to a Lead Member on a Scrutiny Review which, in effect, meant the Chairs of each of the Scrutiny Panels. However, clarification was sought as to whether it was the intention of the Panel that this allowance should be payable to the Chair of the Performance Monitoring Scrutiny Panel. Whilst not responsible for a review as such, this Panel scrutinised the Council's performance against corporate indicators, carried out financial monitoring, monitored the progress of key projects, reviewed the performance of complaints handling as well as monitoring the success of short value for money reviews.

The Panel confirmed that they wished to recommend that the words 'Chair of a Scrutiny Panel' be substituted for the references to a Lead Member on a Scrutiny Review in the scheme in order to clarify the position.