

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

MINUTES of the meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel held on 4 April 2003.

PRESENT: Mr A Murdoch (Chairman)
Mr D Higgs (Vice Chairman)
Reverend M Cooper
Mr A Thrussell

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

13. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2002

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be confirmed as a true record.

14. PENSIONS FOR COUNCILLORS

The Panel considered the report from the Director of Central Services regarding Circular 131 issued by the Local Government Pensions Committee. The Circular stated that Section 99 of the Local Government Act 2000 included powers for the Secretary for State to make provision for the payment of pensions to such members of a local authority as may be prescribed by regulations and make regulations prescribing the role of the Independent Remuneration Panel in the process of determining which member positions may received pensionable remuneration.

It was noted that representations had been received by the Government and it was now proposed that, subject to Parliamentary approval, Independent Remuneration Panels should be charged with making recommendations as to which members (who are under age 70) should be entitled to membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme and have their basic or special responsibility allowances made pensionable.

Additionally, it was noted that the Local Government Pension Committee Secretariat was not in a position to issue detailed information at this point in time in respect of the issue of regulations but would endeavour to do so at the earliest opportunity.

The Head of Finance and Human Resources advised the Panel that initially regulations had been expected to be issued at fairly short notice. However,

the process had seemed for some time now to have faltered. It was anticipated that once the regulations had been received they would be referred to the General Assembly of Council who would probably ask this Panel to consider the issue and amend its terms of reference accordingly.

In a general discussion of the issue, the Panel considered the practicality of “short-life” membership of pension schemes, in view of the dependence of the ballot box for continued tenure as a councillor. The Panel also considered the local relevance of “career councillors” in the context of the current member profile.

RESOLVED:

That the possible expansion of its role to include the ability to recommend membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme to elected members at a future date be noted.

15. PROGRESS REPORT

The Panel considered the report in respect of progress made since its last formal meeting and expressed its gratitude for the attendance of those members who had assisted with its research and to those that had submitted written submissions.

The Panel considered the additional information provided to it in respect of travel costs within the Borough and indicative hourly rates for ‘carers’ allowances.

The Panel was advised that their next phase of work, once the report on the allowances and special responsibility allowances etc had been completed and published, would most likely centre on parish councillor allowances, should any requests for consideration of issues from Parish Councillors be received. It was anticipated that once the regulations, which were still awaited, had been received they would be referred to the General Assembly of Council who would probably ask this Panel to consider any such issues raised and amend its terms of reference accordingly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress made to date in respect of allowances be noted.
2. That the possibility of considering allowances for parish councils at a future date be noted.

The meeting closed at 10.20 am.

**A Murdoch
Chairman**