

Independent Review Panel - Financial Support for Members

IRP - 16

Response from Curnell, G

From: G. C.

To: IndependentReviewPanel@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK

Cc: chris.reading@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Sent: Sunday, December 14, 2008 3:01 PM

Subject: Assembly Members Allowances

All the statements issued by the political parties, following disclosure of the expense claims made by AM members, emphatically state that all the items claimed are within the "rules" and have been approved by the appropriate committee.

In the first place the "rules" for justifiable expenditure need drastic revision.

Hundreds of people, who for one reason or another, work away from their permanent home have to make provision for travelling expenses and/or accommodation out of their own resources and usually spend more than the two nights a week the AM's spend away from home.

Members of our armed forces apparently have appalling accommodation for themselves and their families in many instances. They are then expected to put their lives on the line in conflict situations.

The only risk to our AM's is over-indulgence at the tax payers expense. **This should be stopped immediately.**

The AM's have increased their salaries from £34,434 to £50,692 (+47%) from 07/07/99 to 01/04/08 as well as voting for substantial increases in the unjustified expenses.

Most of their constituency members have been lucky to receive half that percentage increase in that time period, and pensioners less than a quarter of the 47%. They do not have the opportunity of claiming expenses from anyone.

WAG have every opportunity at this time to purchase unoccupied or partially built apartments at Cardiff Bay at really low prices, contract a building firm to complete the required work, then furnish them to an adequate standard so that AM's needing accommodation can rent an apartment from WAG. Members who have purchased expensive items should be made to return them to a central WAG warehouse when they cease to be assembly

members, so that the items can be rented by other AM's for use in WAG apartments.

If AM's require private accommodation they should fund it themselves, including the fittings and furniture, just like other workers are required to do.

Potential AM members know what the job entails before they stand for office. One possible solution to ensure high calibre people come forward as representatives would be to substantially reduce the number of members and civil service support staff, curtail allowances to economic travel costs only, and increase the salary scale by £10,000. per annum.

Regards G.Curnell.

From: G. C.

Sent: 27 January 2009 21:33

To: Independent Review Panel

Subject: Financial Support for Assembly Members

The public meeting at the Celtic Suite this morning was both informative and interesting.

Further to my e-mail dated 15th.Dec.08 additional questions arise from the worsening economic situation and the points highlighted today.

1 WAG owned Apartments:

With daily announcements about redundancies and a building industry in melt-down it makes more sense than ever for WAG to fund the procurement and completion of apartments near the Senedd. AM's could then, if required, rent these while they remain members and WAG would have a beneficial asset for the future which will in the long term appreciate in value whilst saving expenditure on the unjustified mortgage and/or hotel costs claimed by AM's.

2 Resettlement Grants:

I doubt if many constituents realise that these payments are being made to deposed AM's. It is deplorable that existing expenses rules allow AM's to claim for almost anything they desire.

3 Support for AM's:

Mr John Osmond suggested in his opening remarks that the "basis of the debate is wrong and the panel should start from a position of support for our AM's and their remunerative package". This, to me and I think many others present, was totally out of order.

He then took issue with the attitude of Susie Squire. I am sure he now realises how out of touch he is from the applause Ms.Squire received, from most audience members present, when she responded to his criticism. Mr.Osmond also stated we need more AM's to deal with the increased powers they will obtain in the future. Is not The All Wales Convention currently gauging public opinion on the possibility of the Welsh Assembly gaining additional powers

after the Convention decide whether or not to recommend a referendum be held on the issue. If it is ever held and only then if a majority vote in favour will additional powers possibly be devolved.

Mr.Nigel Rudd asked Dr.Bradley a very pertinent question regarding the optimum number of constituents an AM should represent. Would 250,000 or maybe 200,000 form the basis of a research project? With so many variables, it becomes at present an indeterminate number. One thing is definable using what I call "Colliery Working" or a "Rough estimate", we have 60 AM's dealing with a small amount of legislation for circa 3 million people in Wales i.e. **50,000/AM**. whilst in Westminster 600 MP's handle a greater amount of legislation on behalf of approx. 60 million people i.e. **100,000/MP**.

Why should we ever need more AM's?

Could it not be argued that:-

- a) doubling AM's remuneration;
- b) dispensing with Allowances & Resettlement payments and
- c) cutting the number of AM's we would potentially have half as many AM's with higher skill levels capable of dealing with matters more cost effectively.

The BBC have today saved £20 million by stopping pay increases and bonus payments to executive staff members, so why not have a complete revision of AM's remunerative package. I look forward to seeing the results of your labour. Good luck to all the panel members.

Regards G.Curnell.

From: G. C.

Sent: 11 February 2009 23:04

To: Independent Review Panel

Subject: AM's Expenses.

The Presiding Officer Lord Elis-Thomas now pledges openness over AMs' expenses according to the newspaper article by David Williamson in the Western Mail Thursday, 29th. January 2009.

AMs' expenses to be published online every month?

Even if this does happen, the major issue is that the existing rules need drastic revision.

I have every confidence that the "Independent Review Panel will not be misled by this promised disclosure and if the whole remunerative package is simplified, then expenses will cease to exist, disclosure will no longer be necessary and substantial cost savings will be made in the future.

Regards G.Curnell.