

## **Independent Review Panel - Financial Support for Members**

IRP - 21

### **Response from One Voice Wales**

**From:** Simon White

**Sent:** 23 December 2008 11:56

**To:** Reading, Chris (APS - Corporate Unit)

**Subject:** Assembly Members' Pay and Allowances

FAO Chris Reading, Clerk, Independent Panel on Members' Pay and Allowances.

Dear Chris

Thank you for your letter inviting One Voice Wales, the representative body for community and town councils, to contribute to the independent review of financial support provided to Assembly Members.

This matter was discussed by our National Executive's Policy Committee earlier this month and they have asked me to pass on the following comments.

Above all, it was felt that the principles of fairness and transparency are paramount to ensuring public support. It was suggested that the detail of all allowances claimed should be available for inspection and published on an annual basis, over and above the current requirements. The knowledge that all claims will become public will no doubt help to ensure that Members give the most careful consideration to the items and amounts being claimed, thereby helping to build public trust.

Regarding the justification of claims, it is understood that the current arrangements provide for claims to be supported by receipts and invoices but there may be scope to more tightly define those items qualifying for support. Similarly, it may be possible to reduce the range of allowances (which might also help public understanding of the system).

Regarding more general workload matters, the Committee would wish to encourage all Assembly Members to maintain close links with the community and town councils in their constituencies (recognising that some Members are already doing good work in this respect). It was felt that improving such contacts would help to ensure Members are well-informed of 'grass roots' concerns in their communities as well as provide an opportunity to promote locally the work of the Assembly.

Finally, it was suggested that all community and town councils would be interested to be informed of the outcome of the Panel's deliberations and that a summary letter outlining the recommendations should be issued to individual councils.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,

Simon White.

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