

LABOUR GROUP SUBMISSION ON MEMBERS' SALARIES TO THE REVIEW GROUP

The Labour Group welcomes this opportunity to make submissions to the Review Group on the issue of members' salaries. This document will contain submissions on individual members' salaries followed by comments on the salaries that should be payable to those who hold particular positions.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

In the past, salary review bodies have pointed to the Assembly's limited powers when compared to Westminster and Edinburgh as a reason for maintaining the present gap in salary scales between AMs and MSPs and the bigger gap between AMs and MPs. That is no longer the case

There has been considerable change in the powers of the National Assembly since the last review was carried out. In particular, following the Government of Wales Act 2006, the Assembly is now able to gain and exercise powers to amend primary legislation, which was not previously possible. Members are now therefore in a position where they will increasingly be expected to produce primary legislation. We would argue that this has led to a significant increase in responsibility since May 2007.

The new powers have led to a substantial increase in workload for members. In the past, members attended scrutiny committees as well as a small number of standing committees. That remains the case, but now members are also required to attend LCO Committees and Measure Committees in addition to their previous duties. In this year alone, 6 LCOs and four measures are being taken forward. This is a workload that would not have existed in previous Assemblies.

The increased workload has led to members often sitting on three or four committees every week, meaning that time previously available to prepare questions and digest evidence is no longer available. This has led to a substantially longer working week for members in order to do their job properly as members are working into the night to get the job done properly.

It is important that there is good scrutiny of Ministers, thorough preparation in order to test witnesses who appear before committees and

proper reflection given to information gathered before making recommendations, as is proper given the Assembly's substantial new powers.

In order to achieve these outputs, members are working longer hours in committee as well as taking longer to prepare and analyse. This has arisen substantially because of the new powers.

Members have also reported a significant increase in constituency workload. In the early days of the Assembly's existence, members' offices were not as busy as those of MPs. This was largely because they were less well known than sitting MPs, many of whom already had established offices in their constituencies. In addition, as public awareness of the Assembly has increased, so has the volume of work being processed by AMs' offices. Members report an enormous increase in throughput of constituents since 1999. This is reflected in the fact that the original allocation of one and a half staff in 1999 would be grossly inadequate to manage an AM's office now.

THE POSITION OF CHAIRS

It has been the practice in previous Assemblies for chairs of subject committees to receive uplifts in salary because of the position they hold. The Labour Group supports this but feels there is no justification for scrutiny committee chairs alone to receive extra money while other Chairs do not. Being a Committee Chair means more responsibility and more workload as a matter of course. Agendas have to be set, meetings organised and committees chaired. This means more in terms of responsibility. In local government it is common for all committee chairs to receive some remuneration.

THE POSITION OF LABOUR CHIEF WHIP

In the House of Commons, the position is that Chief Whips are paid for what they do. This reflects the substantial responsibility that the posts attract. The Chief Whip does a great deal of work in liaising with members and co-ordinating the work of political groups. The Labour Chief Whip attends Cabinet and provides significant support to the

Leader of the House in arranging committee membership, liaising with members and ensuring the smooth passage of government business. The Labour Group proposes that each party chief whip receives a salary uplift to reflect their extra responsibilities.