

## **Independent Review Panel - Financial Support for Members IRP - 10**

Response from Middlehurst, Tom

**From:** tmiddlehurst  
**Sent:** 06 December 2008 09:02  
**To:** Reading, Chris (APS - Corporate Unit)  
**Subject:** Review of Members Salaries and Allowances

In response to the Independent Review Panel I wish to submit the following opinions.

Salaries-

1. I am of the view that salaries in general are appropriate for the current levels of responsibility and particularly since members received a substantial above inflation increase in 2008.
2. I do not believe that political party appointments such as Whips or Business Managers should attract a substantial salary lift and any additional remuneration should certainly not exceed those of Committee Chairs.
3. The role of Constituency Members is in my view more onerous than that of Additional Members. Casework predominately falls to the directly elected Constituency member however within the current hybrid system of election there is little scope for differentiating between the respective workloads.
4. Finally in setting salary levels I do not think comparison with M.P.s is a valid way of determining appropriate levels for Assembly Members. Given the existence of proven Job Evaluation Schemes I believe the development of a cost effective bespoke system could be developed to deliver an acceptable level of objectivity.

In respect of Allowances I will submit further views based upon my experience in due course.

Tom Middlehurst

**From:** tmiddlehurst  
**Sent:** 11 January 2009 09:52  
**To:** Reading, Chris (APS - Corporate Unit)  
**Subject:** Re: Review of Members Salaries and Allowances

Further to my submission on Salaries I wish to submit my views on Allowances.  
Office Costs Allowance.

During my membership of the Assembly I found this allowance was not sufficient to allow me to employ two full time members of staff. The constituency needs of directly elected members require full time support to deal with casework and to maintain an effective office. Due to financial restrictions I employed a member of staff in Cardiff on a shared basis with another Labour member. This was an acceptable arrangement that worked because we made it so.

However I do not think it appropriate for Members of the Assembly to employ members of their immediate family at taxpayers expense. Whilst some may be well qualified to undertake such work there is no requirement for them to demonstrate their suitability. There should be a third party involvement in shortlisting and appointment of support staff nonetheless to avoid accusations of nepotism immediate family members should be excluded from the process.

Accommodation Allowances-

I have great concerns about the use of such Allowances. Regrettably we imported wholesale Westminster practises in establishing allowances for Assembly Members. This means that Members are able to purchase a second home at taxpayers expense and realise a significant capital gain should they choose to sell at any time,. Whilst I am firmly of the view that Members who are required to live in Cardiff for part of the week should have a good standard of accommodation this is difficult to justify. I believe that accommodation needs can be met by the provision of rented accommodation or perhaps the Assembly could or should have purchased a number of quality apartments for allocation to those who have a demonstrable need and therefore the capital assets remain with the Assembly.

Finally whilst expressing the above concerns I think it necessary to identify the good practise that has prevailed in the past. Unlike Members of Parliament, Assembly Members have been required to submit receipts to support claims for reimbursement of expenditure. This is good practise which enables the Fees Office to control and question any item of expenditure and there are a number of examples of Member excess being exposed. There is a clear need to set down unequivocal and transparent rules for the application of allowances which apply to all Assembly Members and to avoid the bad publicity which undermines the political process.

Tom Middlehurst

**From:** tmiddlehurst

**Sent:** 11 January 2009 10:02

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

**Subject:** Allowances

Hi Chris ,

Having reviewed my earlier E mail my grammar in my comments is misleading. What I meant to say on Accommodation Allowances was that the practise of the purchase of living accommodation is difficult to justify and that that provision of rented accommodation owned by the Assembly could meet the needs of members.

Hope this clarifies my views.

Tom Middlehurst