

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	24th November 2015
TITLE OF REPORT	Consultation by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales
PURPOSE	To receive the observations of the Democratic Services Committee in response to the consultation
RECOMMENDATION	To offer observation and pass on the Committee's recommendations to the Cabinet
AUTHOR	Geraint Owen Head of Democratic Services

1. The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales is responsible for setting the salaries and expenses payable to councillors arising from their duties. Every year, the Panel produces recommendations and consults on them.
2. Usually, the recommendations are not the subject of much debate since they reflect a general approach to the salaries and expenses payable to all councillors but this year, there are suggestions that merit separate attention.
3. The proposals this year include a freeze on the basic salaries paid to every member across the board but they also include some other specific issues:-
 - **Deputy Leader** – Change in the Deputy Leader's salary (a reduction of £150 in the case of Gwynedd)
 - **Cabinet members** – Two levels of remuneration for Cabinet members (not including the Leader and the Deputy Leader). A maximum of four to receive Level 1 salary (£29,000 – the current level) and four to receive Level 2 salary (£26,200 – a reduction of 10%). The Panel notes that this is in response to the situation across Wales where some authorities have chosen to form a smaller Cabinet than the maximum of ten members, and the fact that members have noted that there is an inconsistency in the amount of responsibilities they have.
 - **Committee chairs** (who receive a higher salary) – two levels of remuneration for the relevant committee chairs. Level 1 (£22,000 – the current rate) and Level 2 (£20,000). Individual Councils are to decide who is to receive which level of salary.
 - **Leader of the largest opposition party** – Reduction in the Leader of the Opposition's remuneration – down from £22,000 to £20,000, which is consistent with the Level 2 salary of the committee chairs.
4. Generally, there is opposition to these proposals across Wales. The matter is clearly an issue for members' views rather than those of officers but there may be some considerations on two of the proposals that the committee would wish to consider:-
 - The matter of differentiating between Cabinet Member salaries seems to be responding to issues in particular councils only. I wonder whether setting such a rigid rule will limit the flexibility within individual councils to set portfolios that make sense in individual circumstances? The proposed restriction on the number of

members receiving the level 1 salary would be a further limitation on the flexibility of individual councils. Another problem would be practically how to differentiate between portfolios. If the concern is that members within some small cabinets carry greater responsibilities, an alternative approach would be to set a cap on the total executive salaries payable with the actual payments being left to individual councils

- Everyone would acknowledge that there are some differences in the responsibilities of committee chairs who receive higher salaries, if only in terms of the numbers of meetings that varies considerably in Gwynedd. In light of that, and the freedom for councils to decide on the number of chairmanships at both levels, this seems like a reasonable suggestion.

5. The Committee's observations are sought.