

## **WILTSHIRE COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL COUNCIL  
18 MAY 2010**

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### **COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS**

#### **QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR NICK FOGG MARLBOROUGH WEST DIVISION**

#### **TO COUNCILLOR JANE SCOTT LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

##### **Question 1**

Is she aware of the article that appeared in *Private Eye* on April 30<sup>th</sup> concerning bonuses awarded at Kennet District Council? Can she comment on the accuracy of the report and advise this Council if it is intended to take any further steps as a result of the report on the issue by KPMG.?’

##### **Response**

The Leader is aware of the article and the circumstances to which it relates.

Following the transition to the new Wiltshire Council the then acting chief executive was advised by the monitoring officer and chief finance officer of honorarium payments made to some employees of the former Kennet District Council.

In order to ensure transparency and accountability, the acting chief executive agreed that the Council's external auditors, KPMG, should carry out an independent audit into the payments.

The auditors concluded that the payments were made under appropriate authority, but advised that the approach followed by the former district council in determining how non-pensionable honorarium payments were made, and to whom, lacked objectivity and transparency and was insufficiently documented. The report, however, stressed that no direct evidence of deceitful or illicit behaviour was uncovered during the audit.

Although this matter concerns a predecessor authority, the auditors provided a number of recommendations, based on good practice, which are being implemented in relation to Wiltshire Council's own policy on any future payment of honoraria.

Legal advice has since been obtained on the validity of the payments included within the audit and steps are now being taken to recover payments where it is legally and economically justifiable to do so in the interests of council tax payers. These focus upon those cases where an honorarium payment was

mistakenly included in severance calculations. The Council is unable to comment on individual cases because of legal restrictions to which we are subject under data protection legislation.

Wiltshire Council's Audit Committee considered a confidential report on this matter at its meeting on 24 March 2010, and endorsed the action that is being taken regarding recovery of payments.