

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
8 SEPTEMBER 2006**

---

**Members Allowances – Overview and Scrutiny Responsibilities**

**Purpose**

1. To inform the Committee about the new budget allowance agreed by Council in recognition of the work done by non-executive members through the overview and scrutiny (O&S) function, and on behalf of the Committee's Chairman to offer proposals for discussion about how this might be allocated.

**Background**

2. The report of the Independent Panel on Members' Allowances received by Council in May commented as follows in respect of O&S:
  - "32. *Of all the representations received by the Panel, the most consistent related to the engagement of non-cabinet members in the democratic process. This also related to representations received about the ability of the main opposition group to challenge the Cabinet and to hold it to account. The Panel felt that this was a fundamental aspect of the decision making structures introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 and that it was something they should attempt to address through the allowances scheme. The Panel saw Overview and Scrutiny as the primary vehicle through which the Cabinet was held to account and whilst this wasn't solely within the gift of the opposition groups, the fact that the Chairmanship of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee had been offered to and been accepted by the main opposition group, this emphasised the importance of this role.*
  33. *The difficulty in getting members to serve on scrutiny task groups and perform other scrutiny duties had been represented to the Panel on numerous occasions. The more members failed to engage the more pressure there was on the remaining membership to fulfil the numerous duties. The Panel felt that this could possibly be addressed by allocating the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee a sum of money that he could distribute to members who performed specific scrutiny functions. This would serve two purposes; firstly, it would hopefully encourage more members to become engaged in the process of challenging the Cabinet with all the democratic benefits that would bring and secondly, it would help to provide some balance in the amount of allowances allocated*

*between the majority and non-majority groups. The Panel felt that the sum allocated for this purpose should be £10,000 but that half this amount should be funded by re-allocating half of the political group responsibilities allowance, which was currently £200 per member, as there was some evidence that this allowance could be used more effectively.”*

3. As a consequence, the recommendation made by the Panel was:

*“(vi) To agree that an allowance of £10,000 be allocated to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for him to distribute to those members performing specific scrutiny functions, the aim of which is to widen and increase the engagement of non cabinet members in the decision making process.”*

4. Council subsequently resolved:

*“(c) To agree that in relation to recommendation (vi), the allowance for the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to distribute for the performance of specific scrutiny functions be phased in over two years with £5,000 being payable with effect from 1 June 2006 and £10,000 being payable from 1 June 2007.”*

## **Issues**

5. The Committee will be aware that within the Members Allowances Scheme a special responsibility allowance (SRA) is already paid to the chairmen of the 3 main O&S committees. Group leaders also have the potential to allocate small amounts for specific political group responsibilities (some of which may cover overview and scrutiny).
6. The roles of vice-chairmen of the main O&S committees are not recognised within the SRA although previously considered by the Panel but, due to the inclusive nature of Wiltshire’s approach to O&S, vice-chairmen are generally involved in all aspects similar to the chairmen.
7. It should be recognised that within the non-executive membership of the Council, there are a core number of members who lead/contribute regularly to the work of O&S - with real commitment and enthusiasm, and a belief in the importance of the function.
8. With only £5K available to the end of May 07 and 40 non-executive members, opportunities for incentive/reward across the board are limited. It will therefore be difficult to meet the Panel’s intention of using this as a means to encourage more members to engage in challenging the executive through O&S. However this is a positive step and should

be seen as a form of recognition to those members who perform specific and valuable roles in O&S.

### **Specific Roles**

9. The following roles would appear to lend themselves to some form of recognition:
  - (1) Vice-chairmen of main committees
  - (2) Chairmen of standing task groups
  - (3) Chairmen of ad-hoc task groups
  - (4) Representatives on procurement project boards

The first two categories are generally fixed in terms of the numbers of members, the other two more difficult to predict because of the time-limited nature of the work and the way it arises.

### **Proposal**

10. In order to keep the arrangements/administration simple, and if the above roles are accepted, then a principle could be agreed to divide up the total budget available at year end equally among the number of members who performed these roles. For comparison purposes, last year there were 17 of the above roles which would have translated into £295 per position based on the first year's budget and £590 beyond. For the Chairman of the Management Committee to try and allocate a fixed sum as positions arise runs the risk of an under, or more significantly, an overspend accruing at year end.
11. Alternatively for the Chairman to exercise discretion to encourage/reward individuals as envisaged by the Panel without an agreed principle presents more of a challenge. However the Chairman is happy to listen to any practical suggestions on how this might be achieved.

### **Recommendation**

12. Members are asked to welcome the decision of Council, consider the above proposal and offer any further ideas to the Chairman about how the new allowances budget might be best allocated.

**Ian Gibbons**  
**Head of Legal and Democratic Services**

Report author: Paul Kelly, O&S Manager