	Agenda item 28 (a) **Appendix 1**

EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THE 9 MARCH 2010

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

4.00PM 9 MARCH 2010

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Oxley (Chairman), Simpson (Deputy Chairman), Brown, Elgood, Fallon-Khan, Mears, Mitchell, Randall, Simson and Taylor

80 REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

80.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Strategy & Governance concerning the Independent Remuneration Panel's (IRP) annual report on Members' Allowances.

80.2 The Chairman welcomed Simon Keane, Chair of the IRP, to the meeting.

80.3 Mr Keane thanked the Members who had met with the panel and the officers involved in the review process. He explained that due to the significant changes to the council's working practices the panel decided to conduct a thorough review of Members' allowances. He highlighted the main proposals in the report and explained that the panel had been mindful of the pressure on the council's finances in making their recommendations; some councillors would receive a reduced allowance, but this had been kept to a minimum.

80.4 The Chairman thanked the IRP for the time they had given to the review process and their commitment to finding out about all aspects of Members' work. He advised that the Committee's role was to note the report and refer it to the Full Council for a decision.

80.5 Councillor Taylor praised the work of the panel and reported that the Green Group supported the new formula proposed for calculating Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) for Group Leaders/ Convenors and the withdrawal of SRAs for members of the Arts Commission and the deputy chairmen of Overview & Scrutiny committees, as well as the introduction of ad hoc payments for chairmen of scrutiny panels. He advised that the Group was unsure whether they were in support of withdrawing SRAs for the deputy chairmen of regulatory committees; potentially the chairmen could require support with the large volume of work.

He highlighted his Group's concern over the SRA awarded to the Leader of the Opposition. He queried the logic behind awarding a higher allowance to

the Leader of one of the opposition Groups when there were two Groups with the same number of councillors; by designating an 'official' opposition one Group gained an advantage by receiving a higher SRA for its Leader and a Deputy Leader SRA.

80.6 Councillor Fallon-Khan suggested that in future reviews the panel ask Cabinet Members about their caring responsibilities and consider whether this could be a barrier to people considering becoming a councillor.

80.7 Councillor Mitchell reported that the Labour Group did not support the withdrawal of SRAs for deputy chairman of any committees; it was necessary for Group Leaders to have a recognised way of allowing councillors to gain experience in more senior positions. She was unable to support ad hoc payments for chairmen of scrutiny panels; she felt that this was reminiscent of attendance allowances, which had been abolished some time ago.

80.8 Councillor Mears echoed Councillor Mitchell's comments in relation to the ad hoc payments for chairmen of scrutiny panels; she was concerned that it could create a feeling of competition between Members. She added that she did not agree with withdrawing the SRAs for deputy chairman of committees, as it was vital that there were enough positions available to allow Members to gain experience.

80.9 In response to the comments made Mr Keane made the following remarks:

- The view of the IRP was that it was for the council to decide which Group was the official opposition.
- The IRP would continue to meet and Members were welcome to make representations at any time; the panel did not want there to be any barriers for those wishing to become councillors.
- The decision to withdraw SRAs from the deputy chairmen of committees was not taken lightly; if the council decided to retain the SRAs it was important to be mindful of the government guidance, which stated that the number of SRAs should be equal to 50% of the total number of elected Members.
- The IRP viewed the ad hoc payments for chairmen of scrutiny panels as recognition for the additional work required, rather than as an attendance allowance.
- The IRP understood that the council was ultimately free to reject any of its recommendations.

80.10 Councillor Elgood echoed the concerns raised in relation to the SRAs for deputy chairmen of committees and the ad hoc payments to scrutiny panel chairman, but added that as the council has an independently established panel, Members should adopt its recommendations; the requirement of independence would be negated if Members routinely ignored IRP proposals.

80.11 In response to questions from Councillor Taylor, the Chairman confirmed that the report would be considered at Full Council on 18 March and that the council had previously exceeded the 50% of all councillors guideline when it was felt to be justified. He added that any amendments would have to be considered in light of the budget.

80.12 Councillor Mitchell stated that Members should also be mindful of the number of SRAs not taken up as a result of a Member holding two or more positions.

80.13 **RESOLVED** –

(1) That the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel be recommended to Council for approval.

(2) That the Chief Executive be authorised to amend the Brighton & Hove Members' Allowances Scheme to reflect the foregoing, to submit to Council for adoption, and to issue the revised scheme following council approval.

(3) That the allowance payable to each of the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel be increased by the council's salary inflation of 1% for 2009 with effect from 14 May 2010, (i.e. the day after the Annual Council meeting and in line with the effective date recommended by the Panel for increases in Members' Allowances), in recognition of their time commitment and their important role.