**INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDEPENDENT**

**REMUNERATION PANEL**

**BACKGROUND**

Cumbria County Council comprises eighty four councillors who are elected to determine the policies and priorities of this large and complex public body.

Elected members undertake a wide range of roles and receive financial allowances in accordance with a Members’ Allowances Scheme which sets out the payments to be made for each role.

In addition, some committees of the council have appointed members of the community to sit on the committee. These members are called co-opted members.

The Government’s approach has been for many years to permit councils to determine the amounts payable to elected members, having regard to local circumstances. To sharpen accountability, councils appoint a local panel whose members are required to be independent of the council.

**WHAT IS THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL?**

The independent remuneration panel is an independent body established by the County Council to review and provide advice on its Members Allowances Scheme.

The Council must have regard to the advice of the Independent Remuneration Panel when making or reviewing its Members Allowances Scheme.

**WHAT IS A MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME?**

The Members Allowances Scheme is a scheme, approved by the County Council each year.

The current scheme can be found in the Council’s Constitution, on the Council’s website.

The payment of allowances to elected members is governed by law. The 2003 Members Allowances Regulations (“the 2003 Regulations”) require the Council to make a scheme for the payment of allowances to members, before 1st April each year.

The scheme must include payment of a basic allowance to all members and can include payment of other specified allowances: special responsibility allowance for members who are appointed to carry out specific duties, travel and subsistence, payments to co-opted members and dependants carers.

**WHY DOES THE COUNCIL HAVE AN INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL?**

The Council must have regard to the recommendations of a panel in making its Members Allowances Scheme each year.

The 2003 Regulations set out the issues on which the panel must report. The Council may also refer particular questions to the panel if there are any specific issues which it wishes the panel to review.

The panel also has a role in reviewing the allowances paid to co-opted members of the Police and Crime Panel, which is administered by the Council.

**THE ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL MEMBER**

The role of an Independent Remuneration Panel Member is to:

* receive and consider reports and/or proposals from Council officers in connection with the Members’ Allowance Scheme.
* formulate a view as to any appropriate changes to the Members’ Allowance Scheme.
* attend meetings of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as appropriate, and contribute to the production of recommendations, in the form of a report, which can be considered by the Council.

The work of the Independent Remuneration Panel normally takes place between April and October each year.

Depending on the complexity of the work each year, the panel meets on one or more occasions (usually for a morning or an afternoon) and may request information from, or interview, Council officers and elected members, to assist it in formulating its report.

**SUPPORT FOR THE PANEL**

The Council provides support to the Independent Remuneration Panel in the following ways:

* Arranging meetings and interviews
* Co-ordinating information /carrying out research
* Note taking at meetings
* Support with preparing the final report
* Advice on Members Allowances Regulations.

**TERM OF OFFICE AND PAYMENT**

Panel members are recruited for a term of 4 years, from a Council meeting.

Independent Remuneration Panel members are entitled to an annual payment of £300 (£400 for the Chair) and may claim travel expenses in respect of meetings attended.