



Belfast City Council

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| Report to: | Strategic Policy and Resources Committee |
| Subject: | Special Responsibility Allowance |
| Date: | 17 th June, 2011 |
| Reporting Officer: | Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager |
| Contact Officer: | |

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| 1 | Relevant Background Information |
| 1.1 | The Local Government (Payments to Councillors) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 provide that the maximum amount which the Council is permitted to spend on Special Responsibility Allowance is £82,000 per annum. |
| 1.2 | Following the Local Government Elections in May and the recent changes agreed by the Council to the Standing Orders, which recognise Party Political Parties on the Council rather than Political Groupings, the time is considered to be right to review the distribution of these allowances. |
| 1.3 | A report making recommendations for the distribution of the Special Responsibility Allowance was deferred at the Committee's meeting on 3 rd June to allow additional information on an alternative distribution model to be presented to the Committee. |

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| 2 | Key Issues |
| 2.1 | The division of the Special Responsibility Allowance between the Chairmen and the Deputy Chairmen of the Standing Committees and the Officers of the Political Parties on the Council, as presented to the Committee on 3 rd June, is set out in Appendix 1. This model follows closely that which was established in 2007 following the Council's Review of Governance, which abolished the Sub Committee structure. |

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| 2.2 | At the meeting on 3 rd June, a suggestion was made that the proposed allocation of the allowance did not sufficiently recognise the responsibility and workload undertaken by all the Party Leaders, irrespective of Party strength on the Council. The argument was that the basic allocation for Party Leaders needed to be enhanced whilst the amount allocated to the Party Leaders based upon the number of Members within their Party on the Council should be reduced. It was pointed out that the Parties with more than 5 Members were entitled to appoint a Deputy Leader and those with more than 11 Members were entitled to appoint also a Secretary and thereby the workload falling to the Party Leader was reduced. Whereas, the Leaders of the smaller Political Parties on the Council were required to undertake all of the duties without any assistance. |
| 2.3 | An alternative distribution model for the Special Responsibility Allowance to take account of these issues is attached at Appendix 2. The model reduces the payment for Committee Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen by £125 and £7 per annum respectively, reduces the basic allocation for Deputy Chairmen and Secretaries by £307 per annum, reduces the allocation to the Party Leader per Party Member by £90.48 per annum and increases the basic allocation to the Party Leaders by £1,500 per annum. |
| 2.4 | The total amount to be allocated under each model is £82,000. |

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| 3 | Resource Implications |
| 3.1 | The recommended levels of allowance are provided for within the current revenue budgets. |

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| 4 | Equality and Good Relations Implications |
| 4.1 | None. The division of the Special Responsibility Allowance is based upon the positions held by individual Members either as Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Committees or as Officers within the Political Parties. The allocations are consistent with the Council's system of proportionality which seeks to allocate positions in accordance with the relative strength of the Parties within the Council. |

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| 5 | Recommendations |
| 5.1 | The Committee is requested to decide which of the two models, set out in Appendices 1 and 2, should be adopted for the allocation of the Special Responsibility Allowance. |
| 5.2 | It is also recommended that the allocation of the Special Responsibility Allowance be with effect from 20 th May for the Party Officers and with effect from 26 th May for the Chairmen and the Deputy Chairmen of the Committees. |

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| 6 | Decision Tracking |
| Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager 20 th June, 2011. | |

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| 7 | Documents Attached |
| Appendix 1 – Allocation of Special Responsibility Allowance – Model 1 Appendix 2 - Allocation of Special Responsibility Allowance – Model 2 | |