



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Consultation on Proposal to Reduce Councillors' Allowances</b>
<b>Date:</b>	21st October, 2011
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services manager (ext 6314)
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	The Environment Minister, Alex Attwood, on 9th October launched a consultation on whether to reduce by two thirds the allowances paid to Councillors who also were MPs, MLAs or Members of the House of Lords (copy attached at Appendix 1)
1.2	Responses to the consultation are required by 16th December.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p>In launching the consultation, the Minister stated that</p> <p><i>"I believe that elected representatives – whether in councils, the Assembly or at Westminster – should receive reasonable allowances for performing their civic duty. Political life, as with so many jobs, is demanding and carries risk, and the commitment from our local councillors is considerable. Indeed, I will create a review of councillors' allowances in terms of RPA going forward.</i></p> <p><i>However, there is still an issue about councillors who hold multiple mandates receiving their full council, Assembly or even Westminster entitlements. In my opinion this needs to be adjusted. I believe it is also the opinion of the majority of taxpayers. That is why I am consulting on reducing the allowances of people in this position by two thirds while still recognising the valuable role played by our elected representatives.</i></p>

	<p><i>Indeed, to be thorough and hear all opinions, I am asking people to advise if there should be no change, although clearly this is not where I believe the weight of argument or evidence is.”</i></p>
2.2	<p>At present, the maximum rate of basic allowance payable to a councillor is £9,738 per annum. In addition, the Council has an amount of up to £82,000 per annum to allocate to those Members undertaking special responsibilities. Currently, this Special Responsibility Allowance is paid to the Chairmen and the Deputy Chairmen of the Standing Committees and to the Leader and in some cases the Deputy Leader and Secretary of the Political Parties on the Council. Under the Minister’s proposals, both the basic allowance and any special responsibility allowance payable to a Member affected would be reduced by two thirds.</p>
2.3	<p>The payments which the Council makes to the Civic Dignitaries or any payments made in relation to dependents’ carers’ allowances and the recoupment of expenses in relation to travel and subsistence would not be affected under these proposals.</p>
2.4	<p>The consultation asks a number of questions about the principle of the proposal to reduce the allowance paid to a Councillor with a dual or multiple mandate. However, at this stage the Committee’s view is only being sought as to whether or not it wishes a corporate response and if so whether or not it is broadly in favour of or opposed to the Minister’s proposals. Should the Committee decide to make a response on behalf of the Council, then a more detailed report will be presented to the Committee in November.</p>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<p>If there is a reduction in the allowances payable to certain Members then this would result in a minor saving to the Council.</p>

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
	<p>None.</p>

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>The Committee is requested to consider the matter and to indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether it wishes to make a response to the consultation and, if so;</li> <li>• Whether it supports or opposes the Minister’s proposals.</li> </ul>

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**Decision Tracking**

Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager

November, 2011