

**Report of the
NI Councillors' Remuneration Panel
to the
Minister for the Environment**

Date: 1st November 2013

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Chapter A: Summary of recommendations

We make the following main recommendations:

- **Remuneration in reformed councils in 2015:**

(a) Basic allowance: All councillors should be paid a basic allowance of **£12,000pa**. We believe that an increase on the present £9,738 is justified because of inflation since the rate was allowed and because of increased responsibilities of new councils. We concluded that approximately 50% of the median NI full-time wage in 2012 (ONS) would be fair. (The closest amount is £12,006pa but we rounded for simplicity and administrative ease.) We also recommend that all councillors in DEAs with mean electorate larger than 3,000 (i.e. 1: 3000 and higher councillor: electorate ratio) should be paid **£1,200pa** (10%) more, because of the increased load of constituency work there.

(b) Special responsibility allowance for committee chairs or cabinet members: These should be paid as per the following categories:

Council electorate less than 120,000	£5,000pa
Higher but less than 200,000	£7,000pa
Higher than 200,000	£9,000pa

The import of decisions increases broadly as populations and budgets increase. We based the amounts on a day a fortnight extra, related to a reasonable executive director salary, since a committee chair or cabinet member could be supervising their subject. We also recommend that councils with electorates up to 200,000 pay maximum **10** such SRAs and the council with electorate higher than 200,000 maximum **12**; we consider those should suffice to cover well all subjects/responsibilities in the new arrangements.

(c) Special responsibility allowance for chair or mayor: These should be as follows:

Council electorate less than 120,000	£15,000pa
Higher but less than 200,000	£21,000pa
Higher than 200,000	£27,000pa

We based these amounts on approximately a day a week extra, related to a reasonable chief executive salary, since the chair or mayor could be supervising their work. If a chair decided to split their civic duties with another member then we recommend that they share the allowance as that Council sees fit.

(d) Productivity allowance for chair or mayor: Given the great interest rate-payers show in rewarding councillors for jobs or economic results produced, we recommend that each council ask its constituents whether its chair or mayor should be awarded a productivity allowance based on an annual report. If more than 50% voting agree, the award could be up to a maximum of **50% extra** of their special responsibility allowance. We recognise that a suitable mechanism and guidance will have to be developed to facilitate this process.

(e) Vice-chairs: We believe that vice-chairs of council or committees should only be paid extra when they are standing in for the chair and should receive a pro-rata special responsibility allowance for time actually spent in the respective role.

(f) Indexing: We recommend that all these allowances be indexed to change with the median NI full-time wage as certified by ONS, so that dependence on economic well-being is established.

- **Remuneration in shadow councils in 2014: 50%** of all the 2015 allowances should be paid for the shadow period. This is because the constituency work is likely to be shared with councillors of the current 26 councils and will therefore be less demanding as shadow councils would concentrate on transition planning work. Councillors who are members of both current and shadow councils should be paid for both roles.
- **Travel and subsistence allowances for “approved duties”:** Either full repayment of public transport costs or a mileage rate as per NICS rates should be allowed. Maximum mileage per councillor should be increased to **10,000 miles pa** because data suggest some rural councillors might otherwise be disadvantaged. Subsistence should be the same as for council executive directors. These costs are a small share of the overall costs of councillors and thus more elaborate systems are unnecessary.
- **Caring or dependant carers’ allowance:** The limit for the standard care allowance should be increased to **£329 per month**, subject to present checks, to remove the perceived barrier to increased participation by underrepresented groups. The specialised care allowance should also be brought in line with this, increasing to £658 per month.
- **Office support allowance:** Each councillor should get either **£1,000pa** plus a mobile telephone, with all NI calls paid, or actuals, as agreed by that council. We find this essential for reasonable working and recommend that centralised procurement for all councils be considered for economies of scale.
- **Training and development (attendance) allowance: £200 per day** for maximum three days per year to each councillor and four days to each committee chair, cabinet member, chair or mayor should be paid if approved training and development is undertaken for that time. This is in addition to the actual cost of the training which should be covered from the council’s training budget. We consider putting greater value on training or development completion essential for tax-payer value.
- **Indexing of DCA, office support, training and development allowances:** CPI should be used, as it is appropriate for costs.
- **Tax-payer value:** The total cost to the tax-payer of all these recommendations will be approximately £6.5m and should not exceed present costs on councillors’ allowances.

Chapter B: Chair's Introduction

The Minister for the Environment asked us to make recommendations so that councillors are fairly compensated for increased responsibilities that councils will take on in 2015 after the reform programme. He also asked us specifically to consider remuneration in other jurisdictions such as Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and to attract "non-traditional" applicants.

Thinking through these issues we were able to isolate the following main criteria:

- Acceptance by rate-payers
- Affordability and relevance to the public-sector
- Simplicity and administrative ease
- Fair reward.

As we worked we reaffirmed that councillors fulfil valuable and respected roles. However, we did not find enough parity with other jurisdictions. In most other places, councils are responsible for other subjects such as state schools as well as social care, which are sizeable subjects for reach and expenditure. We also found that unfortunately rate-payers' interest in and knowledge of the councillor role are limited. When pressed, they found an allowance of £10,000pa adequate and were keen that councillors were rewarded for outcomes they produced, mainly to do with jobs and economic activity.

Of course we tried very hard to travel all over Northern Ireland (NI), meet and listen to as many people as possible and to read as much as possible in the six months we had. We gave particular attention to listening to present councillors and bodies either representative of them or relevant to the subject as well as recent studies of remuneration. Annexes to the report will give you examples of this.

I think we are recommending fair allowances. Fair to councillors, fair to rate-payers and fair to the important work new councils will do. We are also recommending a few innovations, for example:

- (i) testing of a productivity allowance for chairs/mayors,
- (ii) indexing the allowances to the median NI full-time wage.

Both would link reward to jobs or economic outcomes and respond to rate-payers' demand.

Lastly, we recommend that the Minister commissions a review of all these allowances in due course, by which time evidence whether non-traditional applicants have been attracted and engagement built with the public should be available.

We remain grateful that we were given this important role and hope we can play a role in implementation of the Minister's decisions. We would welcome views from anyone interested so that our future work can be further improved. Last but not least, thanks are due to many people listed in an annex, but I would like to warmly thank all members of the panel (see annex for biographies) and the secretariat for their unfailing devotion and collaboration.

Deep Sagar

Chapter C: What we set out to do (and what we chose not to do and why)

1. **Pay for responsibility:** We decided that responsibilities must determine reward. Thus to determine the right balance we looked at three alternative methods of arriving at responsibility: (a) a conceptual framework, (b) comparing with other jurisdictions and (c) comparing with other jobs.
2. A conceptual definition proved very difficult. It is easy to see that a councillor handles constituency work, i.e. supporting and advocating for constituents, and attending council and committee meetings, as well as some other relevant meetings. However, the evidence we received shows that a councillor's working pattern varies substantially according to their personal circumstances, with a wide variation in the reported time spent on council duties -- ranging from one to seven days per week. While the latter was inconceivable, we interpreted it to mean that councillors are available 24-7 to their constituents. We also completed some work on a role description and person specification (see annex). Longer-term this whole area is potentially important.
3. At the same time, from some of our listening to rate-payers (see annex for surveys), we found that they generally understood the role to be part-time, but acknowledged that it could place demands on the councillor to be available in the evenings or over weekends as well.
4. We also received different estimates of the time committee chairs and chairs/mayors spent on their extra responsibilities. It was a widely held perception that most committee chairs simply ensured order and due process at meetings rather than strategically managing their subject. While chairs or mayors may work full-time this was largely on civic, representational duties. We believe there is a real opportunity for chairs/mayors and committee chairs or cabinet members to take a much more valuable strategic and influential role than at present, setting the agenda and supervising the work of the relevant director and department or, in the case of the chair/mayor, the chief executive and full council. We concluded that committee chairs or cabinet members would need an extra day a fortnight and chairs or mayors need an extra day per week to deliver these leadership responsibilities, with the latter possibly needing more time for civic duties.
5. While we considered a comprehensive list of schemes applicable in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and some English councils (see annex) we found relevant lessons from them to be limited. For one thing there was no precedent of a similar shadow period nor were the responsibilities being fulfilled uniform across boundaries. In particular, responsibilities for state schools and social care impose major demands on many councils elsewhere in terms of significance of decisions and amounts of money spent.
6. **Functions in shadow form:** We are aware that much work is proceeding to get councils ready for the shadow period. We determined that transition to the statutory reformed council in 2015 would be their main responsibility. Thus something akin to mergers in the private sector – getting structures, systems and compliance right.

7. **Comparable jobs:** Once again there was no unanimity about which other jobs in society the councillor job could be fairly valued equal to. Older councillors thought of a trades-union official, younger ones a retail store manager or school head teacher, while rate-payers gave the example of head teacher, middle management or a civil servant.
8. **Outcomes:** Most people we spoke with were keen that councillors should be encouraged to deliver real outcomes to meet local priorities. Councillors in general wondered if performance measurement was practicable at all and felt content that voters had their say every four years in effect, preferring if pressed to have attendance at meetings monitored. Rate-payers on the other hand were keener on performance being measured and rewarded and would like a link with achievement of jobs or economic growth. Many expressed concern about the current difficult economic climate and some indicated a desire for councillors' remuneration to reflect typical NI wages.
9. **Non-traditional applicants:** We thought deeply about how working people with other employment or self-employment and others such as women, younger people and minorities could be attracted to stand for councillor. We agreed that caring or dependant carers' allowances could be important in addressing some of the barriers for a sizeable section of the population. We specifically considered if a financial loss allowance could be used so that people from all walks in life could be compensated for losing their other income. However, we determined that for equality and practicality reasons this could not be recommended. Similarly, we could not go further on issues such as maternity pay, given the limited data we had (see annex 6).
10. **Office support and training and development:** Given the demands on councillors we concluded that office support, of the kind that councils are already providing, was crucial. Broadband, mobile telephones, laptop, printer and the like are essential and we feel that councils could extract significant economies through central procurement. We did consider office space and secretarial support specifically for all councillors but in the event dropped the subject since costs and practicality were difficult to work through given the almost 500 councillors and 11 councils in play. On training and development we noted that most councils and councillor bodies have programmes to support training and development. We still felt that councillors should be encouraged to participate and rewarded by token amounts for completing relevant training and development.
11. **Mileage:** Many councillors raised the income-tax implications related to mileage issues with us. Given the time and data available we could not do justice to the subject but feel that HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) should be encouraged to consider a councillor's home as their office location when considering official travel. Rural councillors raised the issue of the limit of 8,500 miles pa being a barrier. Having considered the data for the new proposed council boundaries we concluded that it could be so for some councillors who will have to travel further and recommend that the limit be taken up to 10,000 miles pa. On the rate for mileage we considered that it could be pegged to local council rates but for simplicity and practicality concluded that parity with NI Civil Service (NICS) would be fair and in line with current HMRC mileage rate limits, which have been pegged to encourage environmentally friendly vehicle use. We would also recommend that councillors

increase car sharing to council meetings and follow the council's guidelines as far as possible on the Green Agenda by increasing the use of alternative modes of transport such as public transport using the bus or train, cycling to meetings and by considering walking whenever possible. Councils should give consideration to discounted travel cards on public transport, workplace parking for bicycles and incentivising the purchase of bicycles and safety equipment.

12. **Pension:** We did some work on councillor pensions and met with a representative of NI Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee. However, it became clear that the subject of pensions was beyond our remit and therefore we did not pursue this analysis. We did notice however that although membership was automatic some councillors had opted out of the scheme with some of the current councils having 27 members in the scheme whilst other councils had only two or three councillors contributing. We did feel that the present scheme is a good one with a defined benefit of $1/60^{\text{th}}$ of career average of each year served. The pension scheme should be seen as another part of the total remuneration package and we recommend that it should be positioned as such in any future awareness or attraction campaigns. However, we feel that the local government pension scheme could be improved further if portability, i.e. taking it away to a new scheme after a councillor leaves or bringing in from an old pension when a councillor first starts, could be introduced.

Chapter D: How did we do it?

1. As an independent panel we tried to maximise the value to the work from the experience each of us had from different fields. Thus we worked such that all decisions were made collectively and all the work was shared. Thus one member took lead responsibility for a discrete element and all others played a supporting, value-adding role. While we had frequent meetings (see annex 3) we were in almost daily touch by email and on an intranet workspace.
2. **Challenge and rigour** were the defining principles of our work. Thus all the material we read or heard we questioned, debated and looked for supporting evidence.
3. **Consultation:** Since the councillor role is hugely important and a critical public service, we were passionate about consulting widely and listening to others, although we were disappointed at the poor response to advertised public consultation sessions (see annex). Among the people and organisations we consulted were the following:
 - Other jurisdictions – remuneration reports from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, parts of England
 - NI Department for Environment (DOE) officials and the Minister
 - Councillors – a cross-section of present councillors, committee chairs, chairs/mayors
 - Relevant bodies like the National Association of Councillors (NAC), NI Local Government Association (NILGA), NI Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Officers (SOLACE)
 - NI Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) publicised the consultation through their emailed bulletin to over 1,000 community and voluntary sector organisations
 - Political parties of the Political Reference Group
 - Academics and politics students
 - Ratepayers
 - The Public

We made significant efforts to engage with ratepayers and the wider public, as key stakeholders and users of council services. Specifically, we commissioned two pieces of research, conducting regional focus groups and an online survey, which provided us with views on the role of the councillor and remuneration from more than 500 ratepayers who were targeted to represent the NI population (see annexes 7).

To accomplish our extensive consultation we travelled widely. We went to many parts of Northern Ireland including Newtownabbey, Coleraine, Ballymena, Craigavon, Derry/Londonderry, Strabane, Enniskillen, and Stormont, and indeed offered to go to many more.

4. Very early on we settled on a broad project methodology and timetable and stuck rigorously to them while challenging our preconceptions as well as preliminary conclusions. This methodology emphasised defining the roles and responsibilities, considering remuneration alternatives based on the criteria, listening carefully to

submissions and research and specifically addressing each, considering barriers/perceptions and so on in the context of non-traditional applicants specifically, thinking about shadow and reform council responsibilities, and learning from others. We promptly reported all our agendas and minutes on the DOE web site and welcomed contact from anyone interested.

5. We did have limitations of budget and resources but, subject to those, fulfilled all Nolan values. In particular we were sensitive to the ones demanding openness and transparency.

Chapter E: What did we learn?

Obviously we learnt a huge amount. But the main insights to report are as follows:

- **The public:** We will not pretend that we could not have done more to contact the public and rate-payers. However, we could not but conclude that the public showed limited interest in the subject of councillors and unfortunately demonstrated limited knowledge of what councillors and councils do. At the same time the public and rate-payers show a lot of interest in linking pay to outcomes produced and the concept of performance pay. They are also keenly aware of the difficult economic situation that the median NI full-time wage is about £24,000pa and that jobs and economic activity are the main results they would want from councillors. (see annex)
- **Non-traditional applicants:** We spoke to students, academics/researchers and used our own experiences and insight to get a handle on this vital issue. We heard that non-traditional applicants feel constrained because becoming a councillor may require them to join a political party. We also felt that the knowledge of rewards on offer is limited. More work is also necessary than we could do, on examining issues such as financial loss allowance, maternity pay, job-share and evening meetings, so that possible barriers could be removed or reduced.
- **Present councillors:** We talked to councillors from a wide range of backgrounds, political affiliations and circumstance. These included councillors who are employed or self-employed elsewhere full-time or part-time, and those who are retired. Our overwhelming feeling towards the councillors we met was of respect. Those we met showed a high degree of selflessness and huge commitment to their constituents and council areas. Most appear to be available to constituents at all times of the day and night and few, if any, appear to be motivated to do this work for financial reasons. Yet we did feel that councils and political parties add to an already heavy work-load by asking councillors to be at many meetings where they have very limited, if any, influence by definition and are not the best use of their capacity. Many councillors are also involved in meetings and forums where again the link to a council's responsibilities is tenuous or where council staff could possibly handle that contact. Councillors participate in some external roles which some of them believe they should be remunerated for, yet these are voluntary roles fulfilled by non-councillors as well. We also heard that some political parties handle committee chair and chair/mayor roles by rotation. We would encourage greater efforts to put the right expertise in the right roles for longer periods of time to improve outcomes.
- **Shadow and reformed 11 councils:** We are aware that DOE, NILGA and others are doing a lot of work on shadow and reformed councils. However, among existing councillors we did find very limited conceptualisation and understanding of what shadow and reformed councils will do and how they would structure and organise themselves for best results.
- **Pay increase:** We do realise that pay is a sensitive subject and asking for your own pay to increase is not the easiest of issues to handle, especially in public service. While we did receive many submissions for increase in allowances (only rate-payers and a rare councillor or two suggested a decrease or voluntary work), very few offered rationales that were fully reasoned. Three main arguments were put forward;

each was incomplete as conceived. First, new responsibilities of councils, especially planning, were highlighted. However, not many could counter why -- if the role was as an employer and similar to a board -- governance could not handle the addition of new subjects without substantial ill effects since organisations, i.e. staff, would be employed below that structure to execute. (The general duty of competence was also mentioned as a game-changer. While it could be so, the evidence from England is unclear and we agreed that evidence of its working was essential before major conclusions were drawn.)

Second, a lot of store was set by the time required to do the job and many suggested they worked full-time. However, this was of course inconsistent (the last survey of councillors showed, e.g., over 60% with second jobs and MLAs doing this role reported spending about 12 hours a week) and difficult to reconcile with what other boards are able to do, albeit without constituent representation responsibilities.

Third, many pointed to other jurisdictions like Scotland and Wales paying more. We believe such comparisons failed to take into consideration the much larger role of councils in these jurisdictions, including the responsibility for subjects such as state schools and social care which fall outside the role of reformed NI councils.

- **Current perceptions:** One of the saddest points was the widely held perception among many including elected representatives that present councillors might not be doing justice to their roles or remuneration. We were frequently told that councillors, committee chairs and chairs/mayors were “rubber-stamping” what council staff wanted and were “puppets” of the council chief executive. We concluded that there may be a range of reasons for this, including possibly limited training and development and/or confidence to challenge.
- **Mileage idiosyncrasy:** The subject had its share of idiosyncrasies. Many councillors raised the issue of car mileage, both that the 8,500 miles’ limit was not enough in rural councils and that HMRC was causing difficulty by questioning if home to council travel could be counted as tax-free. We were also asked by some to consider if HMRC’s limit on tax-free travel (10,000 miles at the higher rate) was fair but we concluded this was beyond our purview.

Chapter F: What do we think should happen?

We make the following main recommendations:

- **Remuneration in councils in 2015:**

(a) Basic allowance: All councillors should be paid **£12,000pa**. We believe that an increase on the present £9,738 is justified because of inflation since the rate was allowed and because of increased responsibilities of new councils. We concluded that approximately 50% of the median NI full-time wage in 2012 (Office for National Statistics, ONS) would be fair. We rounded the amount so that it is administratively simple to execute (the ONS report the median full-time annual earning to be £24,011.) We also recommend that all councillors in DEAs with mean electorate larger than 3,000 (ie, 1: 3,000 and more councillor: electorate ratio) should be paid **£1,200pa** (10%) more, because of the increased load of constituency work there. (The mean electorate per councillor will be 2,696 but the smallest DEA councillor to electorate ratio is 1 : 1,938 and the largest 1 : 3,796. Making a cut-off at 3,000 given that many districts have larger electorates appears not unreasonable.) We specifically considered if councillors should get a per day or per meeting fee, as suggested by some. We rejected that, as remuneration should not be based on inputs and rather than incentivising inputs we need to be focusing if possible on outcomes, or outputs.

(b) Special responsibility allowance for committee chairs or cabinet members:

These should be paid as per the following categories:

Council electorate less than 120,000	£5,000pa
Higher but less than 200,000	£7,000pa
Higher than 200,000	£9,000pa

The importance, financial scale and potential impact of decisions increases as populations and budgets increase. (The mean local authority electorate as per current proposals would be 113,247 though the smallest would be 81,065 and just three would be above the mean: Newry and Mourne and Down 120,095, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon 139,285 and Belfast 214,337.) We based the amounts on a day a fortnight extra related approximately to a reasonable executive director salary, since a committee chair or cabinet member could be supervising their subject. We also recommend that councils with electorates up to 200,000 pay maximum **10** such SRAs and the larger council maximum **12**; we consider those should suffice to cover well all subjects/responsibilities in the new arrangements.

(c) Special responsibility allowance for chair or mayor: These should be as follows:

Council electorate less than 120,000	£15,000pa
Higher but less than 200,000	£21,000pa
Higher than 200,000	£27,000pa

We based these amounts on approximately a day per week extra related to a reasonable chief executive salary since the chair or mayor could be supervising their

work. If a chair decided to split their civic duties with another member then we recommend that they share the allowance on an appropriate basis as determined by their council.

(d) Productivity allowance for chair or mayor: Given the great interest rate-payers show in rewarding councillors for jobs or economic results produced, we recommend that each council ask its constituents based on an annual report if its chair or mayor be awarded a productivity allowance. If more than 50% voting agree, the award should be up to a maximum of **50% extra** of their special responsibility allowance. We would then recommend that tests of similar productivity allowances be carried out for committee chairs or cabinet members and all councillors in a phased manner. We recognise that a suitable mechanism and guidance for this process will be required. We were asked by some to consider the number or percentage of meetings attended as a proxy for productivity. While we can understand that constituents would want their interests represented, we rejected this as measuring inputs and thus not a welcome way of assessing productivity. At the same time we feel that councils should be able to enforce attendance requirements if they would like to, without our intervention.

(e) Vice-chairs: We recommend that vice-chairs of council or committees only be paid the respective chair's special responsibility allowance for the meetings they actually chair on a pro-rata basis. We believe that the vice-chair's role should be: working as chair if the chair is absent; we do not believe that compensation is deserved for other support that the vice-chair offers.

(f) Indexing: We recommend that all these allowances be indexed to change with the median NI full-time wage as certified by ONS, so that dependence on economic well-being is established.

- **Remuneration in shadow councils in 2014:** 50% of all the 2015 allowances should be paid for the shadow period. This is because constituency work would be much less and shadow councils will concentrate on transition planning work. The very few representations we did receive specifically on shadow councils suggested the pay should be the same as the new councils, or as at present, but we do not agree, as we have seen no compelling evidence to suggest the work-load or responsibilities would be comparable to those of councillors in current 26 councils. Councillors who are members of both current and shadow councils should be paid for both roles, as we support the principle of reward for responsibility. Existing councillors of 26 current councils will continue on the current level (£9,738 per annum) as they were not within our remit.
- **Travel and subsistence allowances for "approved duties":** We believe the present definition of "approved duties" by DOE – for which travel and subsistence are allowed – is appropriate. For "approved duties" either full payment of public transport costs or a mileage rate as per NI Civil Service (NICS) rate should be allowed. Maximum mileage per councillor should be increased to **10,000 miles pa** because data suggest some rural councillors are otherwise disadvantaged. Subsistence should be the same as for council executive directors. We did not receive any representation on subsistence. Travel and subsistence costs are a small

share of the overall costs of councillors and thus more elaborate systems are unnecessary.

- **Caring or dependant carers' allowance (DCA):** The limit for the standard care allowance should be increased to **£329 per month**, subject to present checks, to remove the perceived barrier to increased participation by minority groups. The specialised care allowance should also be brought in line with this, increasing to £658 per month. Based on our experience and limited research we think this change would help and the increased allowance better reflects the actual current cost of such caring support.
- **Office support allowance:** Each councillor should get either **£1,000pa** plus a mobile telephone with all NI calls paid, or actuals, as agreed by that council. We find this essential for reasonable working and recommend that centralised procurement for all councils be considered for economies of scale.
- **Training and development (attendance) allowance: £200 per day** for a maximum of three days per year to each councillor and four days to each committee chair, cabinet member, chair or mayor should be paid to encourage participation, if approved training and development is undertaken for that time. This training and development activity has to be relevant and job-focused and thus should be authorised in advance by either the chair/mayor or the chief executive of the council. This allowance should not be used to pay for training costs which should continue to be covered by training and development budgets within council. We do support placing greater value on relevant training and development, so that tax-payer value is increased over time.
- **Indexing of DCA, office support, training and development allowances:** The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) should be used, as it is appropriate for costs.
- **Tax-payer value:** The total cost to the tax-payer of all these recommendations will be approximately £6.5m and should not exceed present costs on councillors' allowances. We were not specifically charged with being within a budget but our criteria dictated that at least we made some attempts at quantification, without implying that public servants do not deserve more.

Chapter G: What else would be useful?

We cannot resist the temptation of suggesting some practical things, as follows, which could improve matters, given all the things that we have learnt:

- **Rate-payers/the public:** The strongest recommendation we have is for DOE and all councils and relevant bodies to engage with the public and rate-payers so that they understand more of the councillor and council roles and participate in their important decisions. Helping each councillor and council to have better, closer contact with constituents using the internet and mobile telephones would be a positive step; one simple step would be to have a web portal with each councillor having a micro-site with interactive contact with readers.
- **The media:** We wrote to the larger local newspapers, BBC NI and Radio Ulster to publicise our consultation with the public but sadly none of them published our letter. (In fact the only media mention of our work was in an intrepid regional newspaper.) We think the media need to be actively encouraged to publicise councillor and council work. Thus televising council proceedings or streaming those on to the internet should be de riguer. Lessons should be learnt from the greater awareness the public have of MLAs and MPs' work because proceedings are televised.
- **Mentoring:** Mentoring or awareness programmes for new councillors should help bring more women, minorities and non-traditional applicants to be councillors.
- **Productivity allowance:** Testing this as follows is recommended: chairs/mayors (2014), committee chairs or cabinet members (2015), all councillors (2016-2018).
- **Annual outcomes' report:** Requiring each chair/mayor and committee chair/cabinet member to write an annual outcomes' report for public circulation would help.
- **Training and development:** Offering all councillors a week a year shadowing either an MLA or MP would be a good investment.
- **Governance training:** Councillors should be offered training in corporate governance or boards' work and placement with public or private-sector boards, so that equivalence of councils' work with corporate governance (outside of constituent representation) is better understood.
- **Locally relevant remuneration:** DOE could allow councils the opportunity to propose variations on a central remuneration model, on the basis that a business case would be required and all costs would be borne by that council's existing budget so that rate-payers could have some influence. The Councillors' Remuneration Panel could develop broad parameters for assessment of any proposed variations at a later date.
- **Role descriptions, person specification, and appraisal:** Groups of councillors should be encouraged to work together to agree an NI-wide set of role descriptions, person specification descriptions and appraisal methods including peer reviews.

Chapter H: What will we do now?

We will consult DOE to see if we could help them or councils to do either the following or other relevant work:

- Help with implementation of the Minister's decisions consequent to our recommendations
- Test new initiatives such as the productivity allowance
- Help with council-specific business cases for variation of remuneration
- Work with NILGA and others to develop a recruitment, training, development, appraisal and communication plan for councillors
- Develop specific measures to attract non-traditional applicants to the role
- Review the outcomes consequent to our recommendations, once the role and responsibilities of councillors, chairs/mayors, committee chairs and cabinet members (if appropriate) in reformed councils have been better developed
- Consider the development of mechanisms for better engagement of the public in council life and approaches to improve understanding of councillors' role and councils' functions
- Support the development of organisational and governance structures including issues such as cabinet system, in the shadow period of new councils.

Annex 1: Panel biographies and terms of reference

Deep Sagar (Chair): Deep Sagar is a non-executive director and management consultant with experience of remuneration and reward systems across sectors. His main background has been as a senior manager in multinationals like Coca-Cola. More recently he has worked closely with councillors including being member of a planning committee and chairing local authority owned companies. His other present roles include being non-executive director of NI Water, independent board member of NI Department for Social Development and chair of audit at the Social Security Agency.

Alison McVitty is an independent Human Resources Consultant with a career that spans the private, public and voluntary sectors. She brings expertise across a spectrum of HR areas, and, with a consultancy background in financial services with Ulster Bank, she also has significant experience in project and change management, including e.g. introducing new terms and conditions of employment, performance management systems and people development initiatives. Alison has experience of working directly with councillors through her involvement in the recruitment processes for District Policing Partnerships and, more recently, the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships. She was also, until recently an Independent Assessor for the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Alison is a graduate of Queen's University Belfast, and is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Sarah Havlin lives in Bangor and is currently the Certification Officer for Northern Ireland dealing with the regulation of Trade Unions. She has a wealth of experience in the legal profession where she specialised in employment law and in the public sector where she has focused on HR, regulation and compliance. She gained experience of local government in her role as Assistant Boundaries Commissioner and she sits on several remuneration panels for the Health and Agriculture sectors focusing on terms and conditions of pay. Sarah has extensive legal skills and experience in the area of the application and interpretation of law and practical cross sectoral experience in the specific area of the setting pay rates and the assessment of terms and conditions of service. She has strong communication and negotiation skills, has undertaken public consultations exercises, understands how to build consensus and has worked successfully in and with teams.

David Williamson lives in Lisburn. He runs a consultancy business specialising in HR, corporate governance and organisational development. He has worked with a number of councils, understands the role of councillors and has experience of salary management and remuneration issues in his role with the Doctors and Dentists Review Body, where he has reported on the remuneration of dentists and consultants across the UK jurisdictions. David has extensive experience of remuneration management in both public and voluntary sector contexts and has 25 years in depth experience in public sector consultancy covering a range of areas including leisure and community services, advice, health, social housing and regeneration. This work involved regular deadline-driven sensitive projects.

Hugh Bonner lives in Ballynahinch. He has just retired from BT after 40 years' service and has been on a board of governors of a secondary school for over 22 years and is currently Chair of the Finance Committee. Through this experience, he has demonstrated knowledge of organisational development, HR and corporate governance. He has developed good communication skills, particularly in dealing with staff to deliver difficult HR messages and he successfully completed a pay and grading project for BTNI, following a national model. He also has experience of negotiating large contracts and has played a lead role in the roll out of super-fast fibre optic broadband on behalf of DETI to over 90% of the population in NI. As Senior Resource Manager in BTNI Hugh has a proven track record of delivering world class quality of service targets for repair and provision.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The Local Government (Councillors' Remuneration Panel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012, which came into operation on 10 September 2012, provide for the establishment of the Councillors' Remuneration Panel for Northern Ireland. This is an independent panel which will conduct a review of councillors' remuneration and advise on the system and level of allowances that would be appropriate for the new councils.
2. The Local Government (Councillors' Remuneration Panel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 provide that the work of the Councillors' Remuneration Panel for Northern Ireland will be directed by the Department of the Environment.
3. The Councillors' Remuneration Panel for Northern Ireland will advise the Minister of the Environment and the Department on a system and level of allowances that will fairly reflect the roles and responsibilities that councillors will be taking on in the new councils, post-reform.
4. The allowances which are currently available to NI councillors are:
 - basic allowance which covers anything done in connection with service as a councillor;
 - special responsibility allowance (SRA) which is a payment in addition to the basic allowance where the council is satisfied that the councillor has special responsibilities in relation to the discharge of the functions of the council;
 - dependants' carers' allowance (DCA) which is designed to help councillors with expenses incurred for the care of children or dependants while they carry out approved duties; and
 - travel and subsistence allowances.
5. The Councillors' Remuneration Panel for Northern Ireland will also consider:
 - the allowances that should be paid during the shadow period following the next local government elections and the establishment of the 11 new councils in April 2015, and
 - the allowances which should apply for council chairpersons and vice-chairpersons.
6. The key objectives of the Councillors' Remuneration Panel for Northern Ireland will be to consider and make recommendations on:
 - both the system and level of allowances which would be available to councillors from 1 April 2015 taking into consideration the role and responsibilities of councillors post-reform, the proposed new governance arrangements (particularly in relation to SRA) and schemes of remuneration for councillors in other jurisdictions in Britain and Ireland;
 - the system of remuneration/allowances which would apply for a council chairperson and vice-chairperson; and
 - the allowances which would be payable to councillors during the shadow period.
7. The Councillors' Remuneration Panel for Northern Ireland will meet as required in order to provide recommendations to the Minister within 6 months of appointment.

Annex 2: List of schemes and jurisdictions specifically considered

Source data	Subject	Date published
Northern Ireland		
Councillors Remuneration Working Group	Review of Councillors Remuneration in Northern Ireland	June 2006
Belfast City Council	National Joint Council for Local Government Services Scales	March 2009
DOE	Guidance on Councillors Allowances	March 2012
Statutory Rules of NI	Local Government Regulations 2012 No 85 Payment to Councillors	2 March 2012
Median Gross Earnings	Full Time Employees Pay by Region April 1997 to 2012	April 2012
NICRP6	Chief Executive Pay Bands – Councils in each Band	April 2012
NI Direct	NI Deprivation Statistics	April 2012
Statutory Rules of NI	Local Government Regulations 2012 No 279 Councillors Remuneration Panel	5 July 2012
Panel research	NICRP Compare and Contrast Table NI; Wales ; Scotland; Ireland	May 2013
DOE/13/300591	Chief Executive Pay Bands by Council	July 2013
DOE/13/227420	Comparison of Basic Allowance; Special Responsibility; Carers Allowance; Travel - between England; Scotland; Wales; Republic of Ireland & Northern Ireland	July 2013
MRNI Research	Councillors Remuneration Focus Group Consultation	September 2013
ComRes	Quantitative Survey of 500 rate-payers	October 2013
Rest of UK		
Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee	2010 Review of Remuneration for Local Authority Councillors	November 2010
Annual Report	Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales	December 2011
Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales	Cardiff Council Standards and Ethics Committee	29 January 2013
IPSA	MP's Pay & pensions	July 2013
Republic of Ireland		
Panel research	Councillor Remuneration in Republic of Ireland	April 2012
Europe		
Panel research	Swiss Local Government	June 2013

Annex 3: List of meetings of the panel and links to notes

9 th May 2013	1 st Meeting of NICRP No Minutes Taken
28 th May	2 nd Meeting of NICRP http://www.doeni.gov.uk/remuneration_panel_notes_of_meeting.pdf
21 st June	3 rd Meeting of NICRP http://www.doeni.gov.uk/notes_of_meeting_held_on_21_june_2013.pdf
26 th July	4 th Meeting of NICRP http://www.doeni.gov.uk/agreed_notes_of_meeting_held_on_26_july_2013-2.pdf
9 th August	5 th Meeting of NICRP http://www.doeni.gov.uk/notes_of_meeting_held_on_9_august_2013.pdf
20 th August	6 th Meeting of NICRP http://www.doeni.gov.uk/agreed_notes_of_meeting_held_on_20_august_2013.pdf
06 th September	7 th Meeting of NICRP in Ballymena http://www.doeni.gov.uk/final_notes_of_meeting_held_on_6_september_2013.pdf
17 th September	8 th Meeting of NICRP in Belfast http://www.doeni.gov.uk/notes_of_meeting_held_on_17_september_2013_2.pdf
23 rd September	9 th Meeting of NICRP in Craigavon http://www.doeni.gov.uk/notes_of_meeting_held_on_23_september_2013.pdf
27 th September	10 th Meeting of NICRP in Derry/Londonderry http://www.doeni.gov.uk/notes_of_meeting_held_on_27_september_2013.pdf
30 th September	11 th Meeting of NICRP in Enniskillen http://www.doeni.gov.uk/notes_of_meeting_held_on_30_september_2013.pdf
11 th October	12 th Meeting of NICRP http://www.doeni.gov.uk/nicrp_notes_of_meeting_held_on_11_10_13.pdf
16 th October	13 th Meeting of NICRP http://www.doeni.gov.uk/notes_of_meeting_held_on_16_10_13.pdf
24 th October	14 th Meeting of NICRP http://www.doeni.gov.uk/notes_of_meeting_held_on_24_10_13.pdf
1 st November	15 th Meeting of NICRP http://www.doeni.gov.uk/notes_of_meeting_held_on_01_11_13.pdf

Annex 4: List of people or organisations specifically consulted

NILGA (Northern Ireland Local Government Association)

LGSCNI (Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland)

SOLACE NI (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Officers)

Political parties of The Northern Ireland Political Reference Group

Professor Y Galligan, Queen's University Belfast

E Grossman, Northern Ireland Assembly Legislative Strengthening Trust

The Washington Ireland Programme Alumni – Ben Mallon, Bronagh O'Hagan, Jonny Elliott, Aaron Callan, Daniel Smith and Claire Savage.

Councillors of Newtownabbey Borough Council

Councillors of Coleraine Borough Council

Councillors of Strabane Borough Council

National Association of Councillors

NI Council for Voluntary Action (which emailed its affiliates)

Institute of Directors

Confederation of British Industry

NI Chambers of Commerce

Annex 5: Public consultation events and written public consultation: summary

1. We held five public consultation events across Northern Ireland in September 2013: in Ballymena, Belfast, Craigavon, Derry/Londonderry and Enniskillen. We also held a written public consultation open between September 7th and October 14th 2013.
2. Eleven councillors attended the events, one gave views by telephone, one by email. Two groups of councillors requested separate meetings. One member of the public gave views and we received two written submissions from councils. We also received representations separately from five political parties of the Political Reference Group.
3. The mid-point of principal views are as follows:
 - (a) Amount: £9,738 as basic allowance should be increased. A reasonable figure would be £13-15,000pa.
 - (b) Amount for committee chairs and chairs: Committee chair's supplementary allowance should be increased. Chairs' supplementary allowance in large councils at about £25,000pa is large.
 - (c) Role: A councillor spends two to two and a half days a week on council duty. Chairs or mayors spend much more, possibly at least four days a week, mainly on civic duties. Separating the civic mayoral role from chair would help.
 - (d) Shadow councils: It is unclear what the role will be. Should be paid the same as other councillors or the present basic allowance.
 - (e) Reformed 2015 councils: The role would be much bigger, with especially the planning responsibility. However, most councils and councillors need to be much more than what they appear to be today – "rubber-stamping" the executive's advice. It is unclear how chairs and councillors will work in the new councils.
 - (f) Councillors having other employment or self-employment at the same time: Present remuneration does not attract many who are employed or in business. Many who start like that end up giving more time to councillor role. Many present councillors who are employed work in offices of MLAs.
 - (g) Constituents' support or advocacy work: This is the most time-consuming part, with MLAs passing work down. Constituents are however apathetic and only interested if media says councillors are ripping off tax-payer.
 - (h) Travel costs: Mileage limits are seen as a barrier by many councillors from rural areas.
 - (i) The public's demands: The rate-payer would welcome performance based pay and greater accountability on councillors' achieving jobs and economic growth.
4. Overall, we can conclude the following from the consultations:
 - (a) We did not reach the public at large because of the limited advertising we were able to afford. We did let all councillors know but found the small numbers engaging with us disappointing. We could infer that many were restricted because of their political parties' perceived positions and that many wanted to talk off the record since asking for a raise on the record was seen as risky.
 - (b) Subject to that, we found the public's involvement in the role, outcomes and reward poor and feel that the department and councils have to do much more to engage them.
 - (c) We did not receive a reasoned argument from councillors for why raises are appropriate. We also found arguments for committee chairs and chairs/mayors few and far between. Nor did we perceive a great amount of thought about how shadow councils and reformed councils need to work and organise themselves to achieve outcomes for the public.
 - (d) We did not find a lot of interest in becoming a councillor in many walks of life such as businesspeople, younger people or employed people. Most seem to see becoming a politician as the primary question to answer rather than becoming a councillor.

Annex 6: Other documents considered either for relevance or insight

Rationale	Document considered
Role of Councillor	Councillors Commission – Representing the Future (December 2007)
	Councillors Commission for England – Report of the Councillors Commission (December 2007)
	Becoming a Councillor – Woking Borough Council 2010
	Councillors Guide – NILGA (May 2011)
	A Guide to the Role and Duties of an Aberdeenshire Councillor (April 2012)
	Role Profile (Chairman, Committee Chairperson, Elected Representative) - Down District Council (June 2012)
	Councillors on the Front Line – House of Commons, Communities and Local Government Committee (December 2012)
	Councillors' Responsibilities, Northern Ireland – National Association of Councillors 2013
	On Board 4 – Guide for Board Members of Public Bodies in Northern Ireland (2013)
	Planning – The Changing Role of the Councillor post 2015 (DoENI 2013)
	Chichester District Council – documentation on role of Councillor
	List of Approved Duties – North Down Borough Council
	London Borough of Newham – documentation on role of Councillor
	London Councils – documentation on role of Councillor
	Medway Council – documentation on role of Councillor
	WLGA Framework – Member Role
York City Council – information on role of Councillor	
Remuneration	Department of the Environment (NI) – Circular on Travelling and Subsistence Allowances (2006) LG 16-06
	Government Response to the Councillors Commission (2008)
	Department of the Environment (NI) – Circular on Travelling and Subsistence Allowances (2009) LG 15-09
	Department of the Environment (NI) – Circular on Travelling and Subsistence Allowances (2010-11)
	Councillors' Guide to the Local Government Pension Scheme – NILGOSC (April 2011)
	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2012 (Office of National Statistics)
	Department of the Environment (NI) – Circular on Dependants Carers' Allowance from October 2012 (2012) LG 23-12
	MP's Pay and Pensions, A New Package – Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (July 2013)
	HR Connect – Guidance on Travel and Subsistence and Special Leave
Women in politics	Galligan Y, Dowds L, <i>Women's Hour</i> , ARK Northern Ireland Social and Political Archive, Research Update Number 26, February 2004,
	Women and the Review of Public Administration, Hinds B, Gray AM, The Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland, November 2005
	Enhancing the Capacity of Women Elected Representatives
Public contact with elected representatives	Institute of Fiscal Studies – Fiscal Studies Journal (June 2013)
	Internet and Electronic Research Paper (DoENI 2013)
	Swiss Local Government – CRP Research into Voting Mechanisms (2013)
	Elected Members Skills Profile – PDP Self-Assessment (Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council)
	Local Government Reform Inform E-zine – various dates (DoENI)
NI councillor demographics	National Census of Local Government Councillors in Northern Ireland – 2011 (NILGA/NAC)
Reform programme data	Local Government Service Delivery Economic Appraisal – Price Waterhouse Coopers (2012)
	Local Government Electoral Areas – District Electoral Areas Commissioner - Provisional Recommendations (May 2013)
	Job Definition Comparison – Existing, Shadow and New Councils
Training	The Good Councillors' Guide – National Training Strategy for Town and Parish Councils (2013)
Deprivation and impact on Councillor	Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2010 – NISRA

Annex 7a: Rate-payers' focus groups' summary

Background

A local research company was commissioned to conduct focus groups with a small sample of Northern Ireland ratepayers to obtain an indication of the public's views on the role and responsibilities of councillors, and attitudes to how councillors should be remunerated. Two focus groups were held during September 2013, one in Derry/Londonderry and one in Belfast. A total of fifteen individuals attended.

Findings

- Councillors were perceived as local leaders and custodians, however lack of visibility and low levels of public awareness means that the public does not generally know what councillors do or how effective they are.
- There was general consensus that the councillor role carried some collective power, but no actual power as an individual. Many would prefer to by-pass their local councillor and go straight to their MLA, who is seen to have more influence.
- Comparator roles perceived to be of similar value to the role of the councillor included a Senior Civil Servant, Middle Management, and Head Teacher.
- There was acknowledgment that the role of councillor should carry significant responsibility and required a very specific skills set. However there was real concern that many councillors do not possess the required level of skills.
- Views on what councillors are currently paid varied from working on a voluntary basis to up to £20,000 per year.
- After discussion on councillors' actual responsibilities, it was felt by the majority that the current basic allowance was sufficient, so long as those who work hardest and those who take on additional responsibilities were suitably remunerated. The ability to claim expenses, in particular mileage, was deemed to be of significant value. The current basic allowance was also seen to be very attractive for councillors who only fulfil the bare minimum of the role.
- In both groups it emerged spontaneously that there should be some level of basic remuneration with a performance related element. This was deemed to be fair, ensuring those that work hardest would earn more. It was felt councillors' performance should be measured and published.
- It was seen to be difficult to attract people into standing as councillor, particularly women, young people and ethnic minorities. The strong domination of political parties at council level was seen to be a major factor in this for all.
- It was felt that remuneration needs to be enough to attract people of the right calibre, and should also reflect the level of input required in terms of time and unsociable hours.
- Whilst the current basic allowance was felt to be reasonable, few would be prepared to give up their personal time over and above an existing job to become a councillor.

Conclusions

- In real terms, few people understood what a councillor actually does.
- There was concern around the skills of some councillors to perform in the role to an acceptable level, and that this should be balanced with the need to have representation from all walks of society.
- The current basic allowance was perceived to be more than adequate as it remunerates those who cover the bare minimum of the role.
- Performance related pay with a basic allowance for performing mandatory elements of the role, with additional monies for performing over and above this, was seen as a good starting point for remunerating councillors.
- The desire for some element of scrutiny and justification for councillors' remuneration was strong.

Annex 7b: Rate-payers' on-line survey summary

Background

A national market research agency was commissioned to conduct a survey of ratepayers in Northern Ireland to explore and assess their views on the role of local councillors, and how the role is remunerated. The survey was administered on-line, with a total of 500 ratepayers participating and contributing views.

Findings

The majority of ratepayers were broadly familiar with the role of the councillor, and there was a high level of consensus on the importance of councillors to the smooth running of local government, although awareness of the specific responsibilities held by councillors was often incomplete. Councillors were generally seen as representing the people they serve, although some ratepayers raised concerns about how representative the role is, particularly with regard to young people and diversity of religious backgrounds.

The large majority of those surveyed would not consider running for a position as a councillor, mostly because they do not want to become involved in politics. For those who were more positive about becoming a councillor, the overwhelming motivation was to contribute to improving the local community; remuneration was only a factor for a small minority. The role of the councillor is of greater appeal to men than women, with twice as many men saying that they would be interested in running for a position as a local councillor. Becoming a councillor was not generally viewed as a career choice.

Ratepayers tended to overestimate the current basic allowance for councillors, and those who said that they were familiar with the role were no more accurate than those who said that they were not, suggesting that this is a poorly understood area. When told what the current basic allowance was, the majority of respondents said that this was 'about right', although a sizeable minority believed that it was too much. The role of the councillor was most commonly seen as being of equal value to that of a civil servant, potentially due to both roles being government-based. Views on possible comparator roles for a council chair/mayor were less clear, with comparatively smaller proportions of ratepayers identifying comparable roles. Attitudes towards remuneration are therefore unlikely to be grounded in a comparison to other professions.

Based on survey responses, there is general support for a slight increase in the basic allowance for a councillor in the new councils (average £9,805). The suggested appropriate level for the special responsibility allowance for committee chairs was an average of £2,766, for vice-chairs/mayors an average of £3,542, and for council chairs or mayors an average of £6,683. There was support for these allowances only up to a certain point for each position, beyond which backing decreased rapidly. Familiarity with the councillor role did not significantly affect perceptions of what remuneration should be received. More important were the perceptions of the importance and representativeness of councillors. Those who held positive opinions of councillors on these measures were more likely to support a higher level of allowance. Those who believed that the current allowance was 'about right' suggested a mean new basic allowance of £10,946.

There was good support for performance-based remuneration among survey respondents. A majority would like to see councillors rewarded for getting quick results for their constituents, contributing a notable amount of time or improving the efficiency of the council as a whole. There was also support for the principle of chairs or mayors of larger areas receiving a higher allowance, in recognition of the increased responsibility held.

Conclusions

- There was a broad level of familiarity with the councillor role but less awareness of specific areas of responsibility.
- Becoming a councillor was not seen to be a career choice, and did not interest the majority of respondents, who largely were uninterested because of the strong political link. Men were twice as interested as women in potentially becoming a councillor. Remuneration was not perceived to be a significant factor in attracting interest in the role.
- The current basic allowance was perceived to be about right, and overall there was support for a slight increase in the basic allowance for councillors in the new councils to £9,805. Those who thought the current allowance was about right suggested a mean new basic allowance of £10,946.

- An appropriate level of remuneration for committee chairs was seen to be around £2,766, for vice chairs/mayors around £3,542, and for chairs/mayors around £6,683.
- The concept of performance related remuneration was supported by a significant majority of ratepayers, with more than half of the respondents suggesting that councillors should be rewarded for getting quick results for their constituents, contributing a notable amount of time or improving the efficiency of council operations.

Annex 8: Councillors' Role Descriptions work

At an early stage in the review process the panel considered utilising a Job Evaluation approach to benchmark the Mayors'/Chairs', Committee Chairs' and Councillors' roles with comparable posts. This was never expected to provide a definitive remuneration level but might be one of the tools used to assist the panel in setting parameters within which remuneration could be considered.

As the review process progressed it became apparent that the Councillors' role would be difficult to compare with a normal job. While Councillors are, in theory, "available" 24 hours a day, the actual workload varies considerably, with Councillors self-reporting time spent ranging from 7 to 80 hours per week. The panel considered that time spent on the role was not necessarily a predictor of its value. It was noted that some Councillors who spent less time were very effective, while some who had more time available might take a less planned and more relaxed approach to the workload. According to feedback from Councillors, there was a wide variety of approaches taken and some believed that roles others perform on a voluntary basis were included within their Council functions. There was clearly a need to clarify what should be considered to be core Council work (which should be remunerated) and what was an optional role which any member of the public might otherwise undertake on a voluntary basis.

As part of this process, members of the panel consulted with NILGA and individual Councillors. As it was considered the Councillors' role was not a job, there was a general lack of appetite for Job Evaluation approaches or appraisals which might assess effectiveness in this role.

While the panel was impressed by the huge commitment shown by many hard-working elected members in long hours of work, it felt that the most effective Councillors, Committee Chairs and Mayors/Chairs are likely to be those who understand the strategic importance of the role and take a strong governance approach, rather than those with the greatest time commitment.

The panel considered that the increased demands of the role could require the development of additional skills and the full potential of the role might be achieved if Councillors feel equipped to undertake genuine strategic decision making and perform a full challenge function. The panel is fully supportive of all initiatives that provide these skills and professionalise the role including the Councillors' Charter. The future skills requirements should also be taken into consideration by political parties in encouraging new candidates for electoral office. However, it is recognised that this may need to be balanced with achieving diversity and a representative Council. Furthermore, new structures, particularly if the 'cabinet' approach is taken, could require some roles to have a greater range of skills and expertise.

The panel recognises that a standard Job Description would not adequately describe this complex role. However it remains important to understand and agree the key functions and purpose of the role, both to inform potential candidates as to its scope and skills requirements and to assist anyone involved in seeking to value it. To this end, the following Role Descriptions have been developed and used as a broad guide to the roles. These documents take into consideration role descriptions already developed by some Councils and by NILGA and advice received from key informants during the review process.

NI Councillor Role Description – April 2015 (as used by the CRPNI)

Accountable to:

- All residents of the Council area
- The Council
- The party

Purpose of Role

- Developing policy to meet local need and fulfil Council's role
- Provide a means for local people's views to be understood and acted on by Council
- Ensure that Council fulfils its statutorily defined role and responsibilities
- Ensuring that Council's plans, priorities and actions reflect local wishes and best practice
- Hold officers to account for effective and efficient use of public resources
- Highlight specific community concerns to the relevant Council officers and ensure that, where relevant to Council's role, these are tabled for Council consideration
- Represent Council's views on outside bodies

Key Activities

Representing the Community

- Maintain regular contact with residents in your electoral area and across the Council area to ensure a good understanding of their needs, wishes and priorities
- Represent local community views at Council and Committee level
- Communicate Council plans and decisions back to the community and explain actions when necessary
- Promote the role of Council and Councillors seeking to increase public awareness and to improve communication and understanding

Representing the Council

- Represent local people's and Council's views on wider area structures as required by Council such as waste management partnerships (This does not include voluntary roles such as School Governors, Library Service, Museum Council, Education and Library Boards, Leader Groups or Peace Fora.)
- Ensure that the priorities of local people are reflected in discussions about regional policies and plan

Strategic Leadership

- Develop an effective working relationship with all Council members and officers
- Work with Council officers and members to develop policies and plans which reflect local needs and Council's role
- Promote Council's policies, strategy and role
- Contribute to Council debates to facilitate sound decision making and best practice
- Monitor Council's performance in delivering strategic plans and in fulfilling its role and work with officers and members to address any shortfalls
- Play a role in setting Council's budgets in line with strategic priorities and in monitoring compliance with these to ensure efficiency in use of resources
- Taking into consideration local people's views, work with officers, members and other professionals to develop local planning policy and a local development plan
- Identify areas where Council needs to act to meet need and deliver its strategy and progress these with officers and other elected members

Governance and Oversight

- Demonstrate the highest standards of governance and ethics in line with current guidance
- Participate fully and constructively in main Council meetings, Committees and Subcommittees as required
- Hold officers and other Council members to account for plans and actions and ensure that these are consistent with good practice, standards in public life and local people's needs and priorities
- Participate in all opportunities to develop relevant skills and knowledge required to be an effective Councillor
- If required, participate in Planning and other committees, taking into consideration relevant guidance and professional advice, make decisions on planning applications

Skills, Abilities and Attitudes

- Desire to serve the public and to facilitate effective, open and accountable local government
- Strategic thinking and openness to change
- Ability to strategically balance the needs and priorities of different organisations and stakeholders
- Excellent communication skills
- Ability to work with, and be credible to, people at all levels
- Influencing and leadership
- Ability to understand and assimilate policy and reports
- Ability to analyse and challenge constructively
- Understanding of ethical and moral issues and willing to respond accordingly
- Ability to understand and assess other perspectives
- Partnership and team working
- Relationship building
- Corporate Governance
- Financial management
- Decision making
- Time management
- Knowledge of relevant legislation and policy (planning, regulation, etc.)

Council Chair/Mayor

Responsibilities and skills are assumed to be as for the Councillor's role but in addition the following are required:

Civic/Ceremonial Role

- Undertake a wide range of ceremonial functions and civic obligations

Representing the Council

- Represent the Council at a wide range of local public events and functions throughout the year, ensuring that these fully reflect the profile of the local community
- Represent the area/borough at an NI level during key regionally significant events acting as an ambassador for the area
- Acting as First Citizen, carry out a range of public engagements to raise the profile of Council and the office of Mayor
- Working with key officers, promote the image of the area and Council and represent the Council to the media on a wide range of relevant issues

Chairing Meetings

- Work with the Chief Executive/Town Clerk and relevant officers to plan for Council meetings and contribute to agendas
- Chair meetings of full Council ensuring that Standing Orders are observed, business is conducted efficiently and that all members get appropriate opportunity to contribute.

Management Functions

- Work closely with the Chief Executive and senior officers to plan Council's work
- Act as line manager for the Chief Executive and provide informal feedback on key issues (*It is noted that the autonomy of the CEO varies substantially depending on the culture of the council and the individuals involved and this may not happen in some areas.*)

Additional Skills, Abilities and Attitudes

- Ability to chair meetings in an even handed and objective manner
- Public speaking skills
- Media skills

Committee Chair

Responsibilities and skills are as for the Councillor but in addition the following are required:

Chairing Meetings

- Work with the Department Director and relevant officers to plan for Committee meetings and contribute to agendas
- Chair meetings of the Committee in an efficient and effective manner, ensuring that all members get appropriate opportunity to contribute and that good decisions are made within a reasonable time scale
- Ensure that meetings are conducted in line with Council policy and procedures
- If required assist officers in preparing presentations and recommendations from the Committee to full Council for ratification and provide a verbal recommendation or feedback when necessary
- When necessary, facilitate input from the public or relevant professionals to enhance the Committee's knowledge base and quality of decision making

Committee Leadership

- Monitor the outcomes of Committee meetings and play a part in ensuring that the key recommendations progress through Council
- Work with officers to plan any action required to address Committee recommendations or information needs
- Maintain good relationships with the Mayor/Council Chair, Committee Chairs and Party Leaders to ensure a sound understanding of wider contextual issues and views and communicate these to Committee members to facilitate cohesive and effective decision making
- As required respond to other Council Committees, officers or the media on the Committee's role, decisions and recommendations
- Support and advise Committee members to develop the skills necessary to be effective in this role

Additional Skills, Abilities and Attitudes

- Ability to chair meetings in an even handed and objective manner
- Effective networking skills
- Media skills
- "Political antenna" – scope views across parties and plan actions accordingly
- Ability to bring a meeting to consensus or achieve a strong majority decision with widespread acceptance
- Willingness to progress decision making but aware of when to refer decisions to full Council and of the governance and legal implications of such action

Annex 9: Widening participation: feedback from students/academics

We consulted with a number of local younger people including students at both undergraduate and post graduate level who were identified as having civic leadership potential and who have an evidenced interest or active role in community and civic work. The panel also specifically consulted with Professor Yvonne Galligan, Director of The Queen's University Gender Initiative and Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics and who is currently a Professor of Irish Comparative Politics at Queen's University. We further consulted with Eva Grosman, Head of Programmes at the Northern Ireland Assembly Legislative Strengthening Trust which was established to support 'the strengthening of democracy and engaging people in creating a better future for all.' Eva is also extensively involved in community and civic leadership in Northern Ireland and was a co-founder of the Unite Against Hate Campaign, the founder of Polish Cultural Week and the Polish Film Festival.

THEMES EMERGING

1. Under representation of women, particularly younger women

Professor Galligan made a persuasive and very interesting submission to the Panel identifying barriers to participation for women councillors, outlining that in Northern Ireland 25% of councillors are female compared to the 32% average across the European Union.

Professor Galligan believes that a remuneration package should reflect the intention of Government to facilitate people from a diverse range of backgrounds with a range of skills. Thus the remuneration panel should consider providing adequate provision for childcare and other caring expenses, the possibility of maternity, paternity and absence pay, a system of flexible working and adequate resourcing for councillors to make innovative use of technology from home (skype call, videolink etc) which can remove participation barriers for any new mothers, pregnant women or other incapacitated or disabled individuals who may take part in meetings by video link. Professor Galligan also argued for the requirement for councils to have a gender equality plan with financial incentives attached to encourage councils to achieve such goals as family friendly working practices which could contribute to '*changing the culture of the chamber*' and would go a long way to addressing sexual discriminatory attitudes and practices in political life.

2. Under representation of young people in general

Many of the students consulted agreed that there was an under-representation of younger people in local government and most of the young people we spoke to felt a disconnect and were apathetic towards local politics.

Most of the students found the current remuneration package available to councillors to be quite attractive for part time working. The most common reason for not considering a career in local politics was the tribal nature of Northern Ireland Politics.

3. Under representation of ethnic minorities and people with disabilities

Eva Grosman felt strongly about the need for Councils and Political Parties to have an inclusive strategy for minority communities with the possibility of financial incentives to help achieve this.

Whilst it may not be directly connected to individual councillor's remuneration, Eva believes that financial incentives could be used by Government to encourage more minority candidates to be put forward for election and she drew comparison with the initiative of the Department of Education awarding extra funds to schools based on their number of pupils from minority communities.

Many students also commented negatively about the absence of minority communities from local politics and felt that increasing diversity would encourage a more strategic approach from councils as opposed to traditional sectarian posturing. Some students also commented that people with disabilities were not visible in representative roles and that an overall strategy to diversify the types of people being put forward for these roles is overdue.

4. Negative Perceptions

Most of the young people surveyed expressed the above negative perceptions about councils and voiced strong reservations about considering the role of councillor as a career choice. It was interesting to note that none of the young people said that the current remuneration would deter them from the job. Common views expressed included:

- Perceived lack of prestige attaching to the role of councillor, public distrust in councillors
- Perceived lack of strategic capacity within elected councils/perceived reliance on tribal politics to get elected
- Perception that nomination for election is a 'closed shop' controlled by political parties and that councils are controlled on tribal lines
- Perceived lack of visibility of councillor's achievements for their local areas, public apathy, negative media, lack of engagement of the general public in local politics

5. The Need for New Thinking and Practices

There was a very strong desire to see councils develop innovative technological practices to increase public participation in the evaluation of the work of councillors, to increase transparency and accountability and that it was highly desirable to see remuneration and bonuses linked to performance and productivity measurement or the attainment of more strategic and policy based objectives.

There was strong support for councillors and councils to be equipped and resourced adequately to make full use of technology. Some students mentioned Facebook, twitter and smart phone apps as a way to help people engage and to make it easier to rate the value of councillors and to test their performance and productivity.

Annex 10: Acknowledgements

All councillors and councils who contributed

Political Reference Group parties:

Sinn Fein
Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
Green Party
Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)

Organisations:

Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC)
National Association of Councillors (NAC)
NI Direct
Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)

Research companies:

Market Research Northern Ireland (MRNI)
Communicate Research Ltd
Morrow Communications

Consultees:

Mayor David Harding
Alderman Ronnie Ferguson
Councillor Mary Hamilton
Alderman May Beattie
Alderman Arnold Hatch
Councillor Dermot Curran
Councillor Evelyne Robinson
Councillor Sean McPeake
Councillor Mervyn Jones
Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
Liam Hannaway, Chief Executive
Mary Casey
Councillor Declan O'Loan
Alderman P J McAvoy
Councillor Roy Gillespie
Alderman Maurice T Mills
Councillor Beth Adgur

Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC)
Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)
Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)

Councillor Tommy Nicholl
Councillor Audrey Wales
Councillor James McClean
Councillor Stephen Huggett
Councillor Barry Doherty
Councillor Thomas Maguire
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Ben Mallon
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The panel welcomes contact for clarifications or meetings