

**Notes from Meetings with Councillors:**

Each Councillor was briefed on the backgrounds of the review and it was explained that whilst the main investigation indicated that one Councillor had systemically abused the system, the review of other Councillors' claims had not shown this to be the case.

**Meeting with Councillor MacKay – 11/09/2013**

The query regarding Councillor MacKay's claim for attendance at the site visits on 03/11/2012 was explained to him. This was included on the claim form, but Cllr MacKay was not shown as having attended the visits as per the minutes of the corresponding Planning Committee meeting. These minutes were signed off as being correct at the Planning Committee meeting held on 18/12/2012. No attendance forms were held for the site visits, therefore reliance had to be placed on what was shown in the minutes.

Councillor MacKay could not recall whether he had attended without consulting his diary, but assumed that, as the minutes did not show his attendance, he may not have attended.

One possible suggestion was that this may have related to a visit where he had driven by himself, as he didn't need to visit one of the sites. This was noted but this may have been on 15/12/2012 for which the claim showed a reduced mileage, with the claim being annotated 'on site'.

Councillor MacKay accepted this and agreed that he would repay the amount overpaid (16 miles x 45p = £7.20). The cheque for this payment has now been received.

**Meeting with Councillor Shilton – 16/09/2013**

The first issue flagged up was in respect of the frequency of claims submitted. Councillor Shilton was submitting the forms every six months. However, he advised that he had received the email from Graham Leach, regarding the new procedures for expenses and would, in future submit claims every couple of months, once he had submitted the latest batch (up to the end of August). As an aside, he highlighted that this was normal procedure for him in his role as a County Councillor.

Another issue was raised regarding the level of detail on the claim forms, with two claims suggesting that Councillor Shilton was at Overview & Scrutiny Committee, when he was shown as attending Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee instead. Whilst the claims were acceptable, as attendance was confirmed, the need for accurate details was highlighted, so that staff checking the forms could easily check to attendance sheets. Councillor Shilton accepted this.

A query was also raised regarding attendance at another Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee meeting. A claim submitted by Councillor Shilton included Finance in the detail, but he was not shown as attending the committee meeting on that date. However, following a review of his diary, he advised that he had attended a meeting to discuss the financial strategy and had not attended Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee, so the claim was valid.

A similar query was raised regarding a claim for Council attendance on 18 May 2012. There was no meeting on this date. Councillor Shilton advised that this may have related to an informal Executive meeting, to discuss the various portfolios, following the full annual meeting of the Council that had taken place earlier in the week.

Councillor Doody (who was to be met after Councillor Shilton) provided corroboration that the meeting had taken place, although his diary suggested that it was on the 19 May. That aside, the claim was considered to be valid.

### **Meeting with Councillor Doody – 16/09/2013**

The first queries raised related to the distance claimed for a number of journeys undertaken.

The first of these related to a claim for a meeting in Aylesbury. Councillor Doody remembered the trip and advised that he had been given the wrong postcode and had ended up in a different location, so the claim included the diversion he had taken.

Two journeys to Shire Hall were also queried. Councillor Doody advised that a longer route is taken due to congestion on one of the main routes (Myton Road).

A third query related to a journey to the Brunswick Healthy Living Centre. Councillor Doody suggested that the exact journey had not been recorded, so the mileage figure was an estimate. He agreed that this claim was too high and agreed to repay the difference (2 miles x 45p = £0.90).

The next query related to a meeting that Councillor Doody had claimed for, but the minutes and attendance sheet for the meeting suggested that he had sent his apologies. Councillor Doody consulted his diary, which suggested that he had attended, but he could not be certain and agreed to repay the amount (6 miles x 45p = £2.70).

A further claim suggested that Councillor Doody had attended a Council meeting on 7 January 2013, but there was no Council meeting on that date. Again, whilst Councillor Doody's diary suggested a meeting had been attended, he agreed that, for the avoidance of doubt, the amount should be removed from his claim (8 miles x 45p = £3.60).

A final query related to a Finance meeting on 8 January 2013. However, this was the same meeting that Councillor Shilton had attended re the financial strategy and was, therefore, valid.

The total amount to be repaid was £7.20. Councillor Doody asked how this was to be repaid and it was suggested that the next claim could be altered accordingly.

### **Meeting with Councillor Mobbs – 19/09/2013**

There was only one query relating to claims submitted by Councillor Mobbs regarding a claim for a meeting to which he had sent his apologies. This was evidenced in the minutes and the attendance form for the meeting.

He suggested that he would have completed the form a couple of days in advance of the meeting and it hadn't been amended in light of his non attendance.

He agreed that the money should be repaid (8.6 miles x 45p = £3.87). Councillor Mobbs queried how this should be repaid, and he was advised that it would be deducted from his next claim.

NB – in the investigation report, the amount to be repaid is shown as £4.05 as the mileage had been rounded up to nine miles due to the total claim being rounded to the nearest mile (the claim is for 76.2 miles, but it had been rounded down to 76 miles).

### **Meeting with Councillor Caborn – 19/09/2013**

The queries related to the mileage claimed for a number of meetings that appeared to be higher than expected, and it had been assumed that all of the mileages related to round trip journeys from home to the location and back again, due to the limited information available on the claim forms.

The first query related to a meeting in Norton Lindsey. 12 miles had been claimed, but a round trip of 7.4 miles was suggested on Bing Maps. Councillor Caborn was unsure whether he would have had a meeting elsewhere on that date (e.g. at the Town Hall), which might have resulted in a different mileage although, as nothing else appeared on the claim for that date, he assumed not. He suggested that he didn't always record exact journeys for shorter trips, so this would have been an estimate. The overpayment (based on a round mileage of 8, to allow for parking etc.) was, therefore, £1.80 (4 miles x 45p).

The next query related to a meeting with Jeremy Wright MP in Kenilworth. It had been assumed that the meeting would have been at Jubilee House. This was confirmed by Councillor Caborn. 20 miles had been claimed, but Bing Maps suggested that the distance was 13.4 miles. Using the same rounding assumption as before, the overpayment for this journey was £2.70 (6 miles x 45p).

The third query related to a LEP Board Meeting. The claim suggested that this was at the RSC, which Cllr Caborn confirmed was the Royal Shakespeare Company (as was presumed to be a possible case in the report). A claim for 30 miles had been submitted, which Cllr Caborn thought was high, but could not recall whether he would have been elsewhere on that date. Bing Maps suggested a distance of 16.6 miles for the round journey. The overpayment for this claim was, therefore, £5.85 (13 miles x 45p).

The final queries related to meetings in Rugby. One form submitted included a claim for 40 miles for a meeting in Rugby, which was thought to be correct (Bing Maps suggested a trip of 42.2 to the centre of Rugby).

However, other journeys to Rugby were claimed at 48, 50 and 54 miles. Councillor Caborn suggested that he would normally look at previous claims to see what he had

claimed before for similar meetings, so was unsure why the mileage would have varied. Using 40 miles as an agreed distance, the overpayment in relation to these claims was £14.40 ((8 + 10 + 14) miles x 45p).

The total amount overpaid was, therefore, £24.75, which Councillor Caborn has agreed to repay.

The issue regarding the frequency of claims was also raised. In one instance, Councillor Caborn had submitted a claim covering four months in one go. He advised that he normally submits them every three months and was aware of the recent email sent out by Graham Leach.

### **Meeting with Councillor Illingworth – 24/09/2013**

There was a query regarding Councillor Illingworth's claims.

Upon review of payments made, it was noted that a payment made in April 2013 included claims relating to January and February 2013. A payment made in July 2013 covered claims relating to February, March and April 2013, with the February claim, therefore, being a duplicate payment.

Councillor Illingworth was surprised, as he maintained a spreadsheet of the payments he had received, and he did not have a record of the payment made in April. However, upon review of his payslips, he noted that this payment had been made.

Following review of his spreadsheet, he identified that he had also been paid for the January claim in June 2013, suggesting therefore that had also been paid twice.

It was highlighted that Graham Leach had flagged an issue with Internal Audit during the review, that there had been some confusion over Councillor Illingworth's claims and Councillor Illingworth confirmed that he had been asked to submit duplicate claims covering this period. However, he had not noticed that he had been paid twice for them.

Following further review by Internal Audit, it was confirmed that the January and February claims had both been paid twice, leading to a total overpayment of £67.50 which he agreed should be repaid.

### **Councillor Dhillon, Councillor 3 and repayments**

It should be noted that, to date and despite requests, Councillor Dhillon has not arranged a meeting to discuss his travel claim forms. However, he has repaid the Council in full by cheque.

Councillor 3 is due to meet with the Chief Executive on the afternoon of 30 September 2013.

With regard to the repayment of the monies, it is intended that the next claims submitted by the relevant Councillors will be reduced by the amounts indicated above.