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12 November 2017

Dear Mr Reaney,

In the continuing absence of devolved government in Northern Ireland, the issue of payment of full salaries to Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly is a matter of significant public concern - and one that needs to be reflected upon and dealt with proportionately. While responsibility for these matters is devolved, I believe that it is important that we now consider carefully what action might be merited in the continued absence of an Executive and a sitting Assembly.

In my statement on Wednesday 1 November, I announced that I would seek independent advice on the most appropriate way to proceed on this issue. Given your extensive experience of both the Northern Ireland Assembly and issues around Members' pay and expenses, I am grateful that you have agreed to provide me with that advice.

We have agreed that you will provide advice on the most appropriate approach to the level of salaries, expenses and allowances for MLAs in the continued absence of devolved government. On the basis that we expected a reasonable consideration would take around six weeks, I would be grateful to receive the results of your analysis on or before Friday 15 December.

As you know, the work of an MLA is not solely a legislative one, and a core part of a member's responsibility is representing their constituents. As such I would be grateful if your advice could examine thoroughly the relevant factors affecting the current work of MLAs and the level of remuneration they should expect to receive. This should take into consideration the impact of the lack of a sitting Assembly on the range of tasks and functions that Members may reasonably be expected to carry out, taking as a reference point the list of tasks and functions set out by the Assembly Commission.¹

It should also take into account the strong commitment of the Government and relevant parties to restoring the Executive as soon as possible; and the desirability of ensuring elected members are appropriately rewarded.

Presently the provisions for MLA pay, expenses and allowances are set out in the March 2016 Determination of the Independent Financial Review Panel,² made under the Assembly Members (Independent Financial Review and Standards) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. Any change to MLA pay would require a new Determination to be made, and new legislation would be needed to allow me to do this. I would be grateful for your advice to focus on whether, and if so how, the contents of the current Determination could be adjusted to suit the current circumstances. I would therefore appreciate your assessment of:

- What you consider to be the appropriate salary level for Members of the Assembly, bearing in mind the balance between their constituency and legislative functions;
- Whether Members who continue to hold offices in the Assembly should be entitled to additional pay on that account, and if so at what level;
- What support and provision is appropriate for the employment of Members' staff;
- What support and provision there should be for maintaining constituency offices, and for constituency and travel allowances; and
- What other changes should be made to other expenses and allowances provided for in the Determination.

While there are a range of other questions that no doubt arise from the absence of devolved government, they merit consideration in the round and separate from this otherwise discrete issue. As such I would be grateful if your report could be focused only on the Determination and those elements of it that you consider require amendment in the current circumstances.

I also appreciate that the task may require an intensive period of work. With that in mind, the Northern Ireland Office can offer you support in undertaking this work in the form of office accommodation, reasonable expenses, and such administrative support as may be required. My officials will be in touch with you to discuss these

¹ Financial Assistance to Political Parties Scheme 2015, paragraph 1.3.3

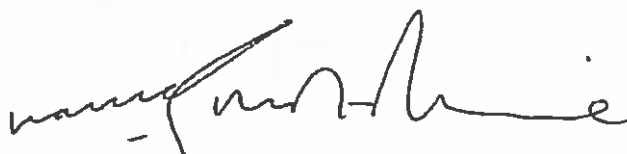
² Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016

matters further. The Northern Ireland Office will also handle press enquiries around your advice.

I wish to be clear at the outset that I expect to publish your advice in due course. The question of how we proceed is one that will rightly inspire a range of views. It will be important that I am able to take the opportunity to reflect carefully upon your advice once received, and that I have the benefit of those broader views alongside it.

Finally, I would like to thank you again for your willingness to accept this undertaking, which I know will be appreciated by many right across Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Brokenshire', written in a cursive style.

**RT HON JAMES BROKENSHERE MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**