



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

Councillor Colin Lambert  
Leader, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council  
Floor 2, Number One Riverside  
Smith Street  
Rochdale  
OL16 1XU

**Brandon Lewis MP**  
*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State*

**Department for Communities and Local  
Government**

Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU

Tel: 0303 444 3430  
Fax: 0303 444 3986  
E-Mail: [brandon.lewis@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:brandon.lewis@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.gov.uk/dclg](http://www.gov.uk/dclg)

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In recent months, there has been significant public comment about the remuneration of senior staff at Rochdale Council. In particular, there has been criticism about an apparent lack of transparency in relation to the severance awarded to your ex-chief executive, Roger Eillis. More recently, there has been concern expressed about reports that the Council is considering a substantial increase to the salary of the current chief executive. These are matters that Simon Danczuk MP has raised directly with Ministers and with the Permanent Secretary.

We expect councils to be open and transparent about the decisions they make in the pay and reward of staff, particularly senior staff. Severance payments made to senior staff must be disclosed in an authority's annual Statement of Accounts and cannot be protected from disclosure by confidentiality agreements. Regulations require that remuneration for certain senior staff must be set out according to particular categories, including the total amount of compensation paid for loss of employment.

Taking account of this requirement, my officials have sought to understand how your Council has accounted for any severance or redundancy paid to Mr Ellis. I am afraid that they have found the position to be less than clear. There appears to be no payment listed as compensation for loss of employment in the accounts relating to 2011-12 or 2012-13, during which period Mr Ellis is reported to have left the Council. Transparency on this point is not aided by the Council's decision for 2012-13 to no longer identify the chief executive by name, and by seemingly erroneous notes in the 2012-13 Accounts which suggest that the information provided relates to a chief executive who left the post in April 2013 and one who took up the post in May 2013. In view of this, I would be grateful if you could provide an explanation of the position, including whether there are errors in that section of the Council's accounts for either year.

Finally, I understand that on 11 December the Council will consider proposals to increase the remuneration of some senior staff, including the chief executive. Clearly, it is for local Members to make accountable decisions on the management of their workforces. In considering the proposals, I hope that Members will think hard about whether such increases would be in the best interest of local taxpayers particularly at a time when councils should be focussed on making sensible savings to protect frontline services and keep council tax down.

I am placing this letter in the public domain.

**BRANDON LEWIS MP**