

**To: Corporate Policy & Resources Committee Date: 18 October 2016**

**Correspondence report** *(copies available from Democratic Services upon request)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **Northern Ireland Assembly Call for Evidence: Non-Domestic Rating System in Northern Ireland (Committee For Finance)** |  |
|  | The Committee is keen to identify the issues facing businesses across all sectors in order to gain an understanding in advance of any policy proposals.  The Department of Finance is currently undertaking a review of the Non-Domestic Rating System in NI which will form the basis of future policy proposals for reform. Council’s evidence will assist the Committee in fulfilling its scrutiny and policy development role. |  |
| **2** | **Department for Communities - Proposed amendments to Councillor Allowance Guidance in respect of flexibility of councils paying for councillor broadband, telephone calls and mobile data costs** |  |
|  | The provision of broadband etc was discussed at a meeting with the Minister for Communities on 9 August 2016. A letter seeking views on the proposed rewording of the associated guidance was then issued by the Department to interested parties on 2 September 2016.  Following consideration of the views received the proposed wording in the guidance has been further refined, as shown in the Annex. The refinement means that councils will have the flexibility to cover the costs of councillor broadband and mobile data, as required for council business, but will not be able to cover the costs of telephone calls except where those calls are an integral part of a communications bundle.  The cost of any telephone calls would remain, as it has been historically and currently, the responsibility of a councillor to be paid out of the basic allowance which now includes the £1,000 consumables element. The £1,000 uplift should provide sufficient scope to cover the cost of any telephone calls including the costs of any other necessary consumables. |  |
| **3** | **Department for Communities - Addenda To Guidance On Councillor Allowances** |  |
|  | Please find attached, amendments to Paragraph 7 (iv), Dependants’ Carers’ Allowance, and Paragraph 8 (iii), Travel and Subsistence Allowances of the Guidance on Councillor Allowances as issued on 24 February 2015.  2. The amendment to Paragraph 7 (iv) which is back dated to 1 April 2016 provides a wider definition of a carer in the context of Dependants’ Carers’ Allowance and supersedes the first Addendum to Paragraph 7 which was issued on 20 March 2016.  3. The amendment to Paragraph 8 (iii) provides more clarification on submission of claims for travel and subsistence. |  |