

Legislative Council (Part 1) - Can we afford the Luxury of LegCo?

Written by PAG

Thursday, 20 February 2014 22:38 - Last Updated Saturday, 22 February 2014 12:10



"They say the Manx have 200 words for members of LegCo"

The recent move by Phil Gawne to abolish the Legislative Council received short shrift from a majority of his of his colleagues in Keys and was thrown out.

At least the proposal raised some fundamental arguments about the purpose and cost of LegCo and it is this latter aspect which we explore in more detail.

The basic salary, from April 2014, for a member of the Legislative Council is £38,771.00.

LegCo has responsibility for the consideration of draft primary legislation (Bills). It is an important role, reviewing and revising new legislation presented to it, generally from the Keys.

PAG analysed the amount of time spent in formal sittings of Council in 2013 and it totalled just 30 hours, or about 4 working days.

Additionally LegCo is one of the branches of Tynwald and members are required to be present

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when it sits 11 times a year. We estimate that may amount to a total of 20 full days.

Members may also serve on one or more Committee of Tynwald (of which there are about 20).

On the face of it the parliamentary role of an MLC is well paid, about £1,600 per formal day put in.

MLCs however may be asked to perform a governmental role, as a member of a Department(s) or an Authority.

There is no information readily available about the amount of time devoted to these roles.

What is known is that there is a pay enhancement of between 30% to 50%.

The remunerations of the existing members of the Legislative Council, from April 2014, will be:

Butt, Coleman, Corkish, Crowe, Turner & Wild - £50,402.00

Braidwood, Downie (Treasury) - £54,279.00

Christian (President) - £58,156.00

Over a year the total cost is just short of £400,000. This does not include any pension contribution

MLCs are not elected by the public, unlike MHKs, yet the pay scale is exactly the same. The workload of an MHK is much greater because of constituency responsibilities.

It is surprising that our representatives have allowed this discrepancy to go on for so long.

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It was perhaps the intention of Phil Gawne to draw public attention to the functioning and role of LegCo and for us then to ask are we getting value for money?

In the meantime we await a second reading of the the Legislative Council Reform Bill 2014, which we consider in Part 2.