

COUNCIL MEETING – 9 MARCH 2021

MEMBERS ALLOWANCES – REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform the Council of the report and recommendations of the Members Independent Remuneration Panel.
- 1.2 To enable the Council to set a scheme of Members' Allowances in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 As Members will be aware the Independent Remuneration Panel was established following the meeting of the Council held on 15 October 2019. The Panel comprised of John Shaw (Chairman) and Sarah Brittan and Paul Cox, the Council's two Independent Members.
- 2.2 The current scheme of Members' Allowances was last approved by the Council on 6 February 2016 following the last Panel Report. The Regulations set out the range of allowances that can be paid to Councillors and the requirement to have an Independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations to the Council regarding Members' Allowances.
- 2.3 The basic role of the Panel was to make recommendations as to:
 - the level of Basic Allowance for all Members;
 - the categories of special responsibility for which a Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid and the levels of those allowances;
 - as to whether Dependent Carers' allowance should be payable to Members and the amount of such an allowance;
 - travelling and subsistence allowances; and
 - any annual increase
- 2.4 Following the consideration of a range of benchmarking information, an online questionnaire circulated to all Members, and a series of individual and group meetings with Members, the Independent Remuneration Panel have now completed their report and this is attached as **Appendix A**.
- 2.5 Attached as **Appendix B** is a table which sets out the proposed changes from the current scheme. These are in red text. The reasoning for the proposals are detailed in the Panel report.
- 2.6 The Council must consider the report of the Panel before it sets a scheme for payment of Councillors' Allowances and may decide whether or not to adopt the recommendations of the panel. The Report of the Panel has been considered by the Councillors' Commission. Details of which are contained in Section 3.0 of the report.
- 2.7 The timetable for the review of Members Allowances had any new Scheme being implanted as from 1 April 2021.

3.0 Councillors' Commission

- 3.1 The Commission considered the content of the report at their meeting held on 25 February 2021.
- 3.2 The Commission were minded to recommend the Full Council to approve the proposed new scheme of Members Allowances as set out in the Panel report. However, they recognised that the Full Council may consider that it may not be appropriate to implement at the current time given the impact of the pandemic.
- 3.3 In addition, the Councillors' Commission raised a specific question in respect of paragraph 4.7 of the Panel report, as the Panel had not recommended any form of allowance for Members of the Planning Committee, but had suggested that this issue 'might be better addressed in other ways'.
- 3.4 The Commission asked the Panel to define these 'other ways' and the formal response of the Panel was as follows:

"The Panel welcome the further enquiry from the Councillors Commission in relation to the Planning Committee. As indicated in the report, we considered that the issue of the length of time spent by members of the Planning Committee might be addressed in other ways. We didn't feel that elaborating on this was part of our remit as these are really matters for the Council. However, to expand further we feel that the Council could consider the best practice of other local authorities in relation to the administration of the Planning Committee in order to reduce the current workload. Ideas which the Panel felt could be considered were utilising technology to reduce the requirements for site visits (as has occurred during Covid); reducing the lengths of committee reports; and reducing the numbers of applications being considered by the Committee".

- 3.5 This matter can be addressed by the Councillors' Commission and was felt did not need to delay the Council in determining whether or not to implement the new Scheme of Members Allowances as recommended by the Panel.

4.0 Financial Implications (FIN20-21/1062)

- 4.1 The changes to Members' allowances as outlined in **Appendices A and B** are forecasted to result in an additional £20,518 of full-year costs in 2021/22. This assumes a 0% pay award for 2021/22.
- 4.2 A 1% pay award has been assumed in the Revenue Budget and Council Tax Setting 2021/22 report to be presented to Full Council on 9 March 2021. If the Members' allowances in red text in **Appendix B** are uplifted by 1%, the changes to Members' allowances are forecasted to result in an additional £23,339 of full-year costs in 2021/22.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

That, having taken into account the views of the Councillors' Commission, the Council considers the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Members Allowances and determines whether to implement a new Scheme with effect from 1 April 2021.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information please contact Nigel Hill on extension 5243.

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