

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL
HELD IN THE ROOM 27, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 20 JUNE 2018,
AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Mr N Moss (Chairman)
Mr C Leage, Mrs S Newton, Mr J Pool and
Mr G Sexton

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor L Haysey (Part of the meeting)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Alison Stuart	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Alison Street	- Principal Accountant

1 MINUTES

Members received the Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 March 2018. Mr J Pool made a number of observations seeking clarification and proposed changes to the Minute 3 (Review of Members' Allowances). These were:

- Third paragraph second line, insert "in" and omit "take place";

- Seventh paragraph third line insert "2%" after "provision of";
- Seventh paragraph sixth line insert "2%" after "could be" and omit the words "Between 1-";
- Within paragraph "Basic Allowance" second bullet point omit the words "due regard to" before the word "inflation";
- Within paragraph "Leader's Allowance" first bullet point, sixth line insert "for each of the years 2018/19 and 2019/20" after "by 1%" and omit the words "a period of 2 years";
- Within paragraph "Deputy Leader", first bullet point, sixth line insert "for each of the years 2018/19 and 2019/20" after "by 1%" and omit the words "a period of 2 years";
- With the paragraph "Executive Members", first bullet point, sixth line insert "for each of the years 2018/19 and 2019/20" after "by 1%" and omit the words "a period of 2 years" ;
- Within the summary of recommendations, last paragraph insert "reviewed in 2018/19 and 2019/20" after "allowance ".

It was agreed that the proposed changes be made to the Minutes.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on

14 March 2018, as now amended, be signed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman commented that East Herts Members had requested that further consideration be given to the IRP's recommendations following its review of Members' Allowances on 14 March 2018. He reminded the Panel of its recommendations at that meeting.

The Chairman commented that the Leader and other key Officers were making themselves available should Members need further information in relation to the Review of Members' Allowance Scheme 2018/19 and in particular Licensing and Human Resources Committee issues.

3 REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2018/19

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report on whether to recommend any increases, decreases or no change to the allowances specified in the report following confirmation of staff pay awards. She provided a summary of the Panel Members' March 2018 recommendations.

Mrs S Newton reminded the Panel that it was independent and that whatever the Panel decided was referred to Council. Additionally, it was for Council to approve or not. The Panel Chairman stated that there was no requirement to change their previous recommendations. He added that the Leader had asked for the opportunity to address the Panel in the light of Members' disappointment that the Panel had recommended a 1% increase rather than a 2% increase and no changes to the allowances for:

- the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Council;
and
- the special responsibility allowances for the Chairmen of Licensing and Human Resources Committees.

The Leader had also requested the Panel to consider a new payment to Vice Chairman of the two Scrutiny Committees.

The Monitoring Officer explained that the 2% staff award had been made after the IRP's meeting on 14 March 2018. The Chairman said that it was the Panel's opportunity to review. If they wished, their recommendations in the light of further information to be provided by the Leader.

Mr G Sexton said that he was not at variance with the previous recommendations adding that in terms of an increase, Members' Allowances did not have to be linked to that of staff pay awards. He noted that staff had been awarded a 2% increase but that he did not see any reason in changing the Panel's earlier recommendations, unless other information had come to light. Mrs Newton reminded the Panel that these were not salaries, but allowances being paid.

The Panel Chairman was of the view that it appeared to him that Panel Members were not pre-disposed to change their earlier recommendations.

The Panel decided that the Head of Housing and Health and the Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Health would not be needed to address the Panel.

At 2.25pm the Leader of the Council was invited to address the Panel. For the Leader's benefit the Chairman summarised the Panel's earlier recommendations.

The Leader thanked the Panel for the opportunity to address them. She recognised the Panel's independent status but felt that there was a mismatch in the payment suggested. The Leader said that recommendations had been made by the Panel before the Panel knew what the staff award was. She felt that it should not be more than what the staff should receive but that it should be within the same magnitude as it had been over a number of years.

Mrs Newton asked the Leader whether she felt that a precedent had been set. The Leader said she did not and accepted that the Panel was independent but wanted to clarify that she considered there was a mismatch. She reminded the Panel that some time ago Members had accepted a "pay" cut to align itself with what other authorities were paying. She acknowledged that staff salaries had been suppressed for a number of years but that Members did not receive a salary for their commitment.

Mr Leage commented that the 2% pay award to staff had been to address inflation concerns and felt that Members should be given the same consideration. Mr Sexton reminded the Panel that not everyone would receive 2% and that it was tapered depending on salary grade / banding. Mr J Pool provided salary payment clarification with regard to spinal column points and banding.

The Panel Chairman commented on concerns raised by Members in relation to a recommendation not to increase the allowances paid to the Chairmen of both Human Resources and Licensing Committees.

The Leader explained that in relation to Licensing there was a lot of work done behind the scenes. She acknowledged that there were only 2 – 3 meetings a year but there were a lot of Licensing Sub Committees arranged and referred to Members' active participation in relation to night time economy issues. On the issue of an increased payment to the Chairman of HR Committee, she felt that no increase was appropriate.

The Panel Chairman drew the Leader's attention to the proposals which had caused concern for Members. The Leader referred to the active role of the Vice Chairman of Development Management Committee and that the post holder attended all Committee briefings and co-ordinated with the Chairman. She said that it was a very pro-active role and referred to substantial increases in planning permissions for housing which were being submitted to Planning Officers.

In relation to the Vice Chairman of Licensing Committee, she explained that it was the Chairman who carried out a lot of the work.

The Panel discussed the issue of looking at the whole allowance structure. Mr Pool suggested that if the Panel was going to support an increase, he felt that it was important to strengthen the justification.

Following the departure of the Leader at 2.55pm the Panel

debated at length following:

- the proposal that the Vice Chairman of Development Management Committee should receive an allowance (in the light of further information provided by the Leader);
- the payment of a special responsibility allowance for the Vice Chairmen of the two Scrutiny Committees;
- the allowance paid to Chairman of Human Resources Committee; and
- the allowance paid to the Chairman of Licensing Committee;

Mr Sexton suggested that Councillors might be viewed as Senior Officers in the context of roles. He suggested that the Panel take a prudent view of the inflation situation and reminded Members that not all staff would receive 2% because of the banding structure. Mr Pool was concerned about basic allowance and Mr Leage suggested that the basic allowance could be increased by 2% across the board. This was supported.

RECOMMENDED - that having reviewed the recommendations made at the meeting in March 2018 and in the light of further information which had been submitted to the Panel and the observations made by the Leader of the Council, agreed to support recommendations to Council that:

- (a) the basic allowance paid to all Members be increased by 2% (as this encompassed a lot more Members and was more equitable) over the period 2018/19 and 2019/20;

(b) except for (d) and (e) below, Special Responsibility Allowances be increased by 1% (as this reflected additional responsibilities);

(c) no change be made to the allowances to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Council;

(d) no change to the allowance paid to the Chairman of Licensing Committee;

(e) no change to the allowance paid to the Chairman of Human Resources Committee;

(f) a payment be made to the Vice Chairman of Development Management Committee in the sum of £2,200 per annum;

(Reason: The Panel was mindful that major housing developments were taking place and of the additional responsibilities this placed on both the Chairman and Vice Chairman. The Panel felt that the allowance should be based on 30% of the Chairman's allowance which was in line with what other Authorities paid who made this payment)

(g) a review of Special Responsibility Allowances be undertaken by a consultant which would highlight the basis for the allowances. It was recognised that a new administration would be in place in May 2019.

(h) no special responsibility allowance be paid to the Vice chairman of the two scrutiny committees.

The Panel Chairman reminded Members of the need to

provide reasoned justifications for their decisions and were mindful of the Panel's responsibilities to Council tax payers and the need to be fair to elected Members. They therefore came to the view that it was appropriate to separate the basic allowance and the special responsibility allowance because that allowed a fairer distribution of funding available to those who had additional duties and which should be suitably recompensed.

The Panel Chairman said that Members were unable to come to that recommendation in March because it was not clear that 2% would be paid to the staff. This had now been clarified and this now provided the IRP with the ability to depart from its earlier findings in the interests of fairness and equity.

The Panel Chairman also proposed clarification of the basis on which subsistence payments for breakfast and lunch could be paid. The Panel agreed to substitute the definition agreed at its meeting in March with:

- Breakfast up to 11am if absence from home from before 7am
- Lunch between 12.00 noon and 3pm if absent from home before 8.00 am

The amounts payable for both remained as recommended at its meeting in March.

The meeting closed at 3.45 pm