

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL
HELD IN THE ROOM 27, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 11 APRIL 2017,
AT 10.30 AM

PRESENT: Mr N Moss (Chairman)
Mr J Pool and Mr G Sexton

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Democratic Services Officer
Isabel Brittain	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Alison Stuart	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was moved by Mr G Sexton and seconded by Mr J Pool that Mr N Moss be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED – that Mr N Moss be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman, Mr Nicholas Moss advised the Panel that he acted as the Council’s Independent Person in relation to complaints submitted under the Code of Conduct.

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel noted the Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED – that the Terms of Reference be noted.

4 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME 2017/18

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which provided a summary of previous recommendations and the Council's response and which set out a number of proposed recommendations for consideration by Council on 10 May 2017.

The Chairman, Mr Moss, reminded the Panel that the recommendations as detailed, had been provided as guidance and structure; and it was for the Panel to consider whether these should be accepted, amended or rejected. He added that it would then be for Members of the Council to either accept or reject the Panel's recommendations.

The Panel referred the “Guidance on Local Authority Member Allowances” for further information. The Panel debated at length the suggestion that the Members' basic allowance be increased by 1% and suggested that a future review be undertaken on the amount of work undertaken by Members in the course of representing their constituents.

The Head of Strategic Finance and Property Services confirmed that a 1% – 1.5% increase in Members' Allowances had been factored into the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The Panel debated this figure in the context of bench-marking information for other Hertfordshire authorities, as provided.

The Panel were reminded that an increase of 1% in terms of Members' basic allowance would be in line with Officers' recent pay rise. The Panel felt that it was also important to consider the changes to the scrutiny process and the reduction from five to two in the number of scrutiny committees and how this would impact on Members' work load. The Panel noted that there would be a reduction in costs given the revised scrutiny arrangements and also supported the suggestion that a consultation exercise take place during the forthcoming year to review Members' workload, in order to establish that the allowance paid, remained fair and equitable.

The Monitoring Officer suggested that Officers could contact the Local Government Association to establish whether there was any national information available as a guide (and in particular, more recent than the LGA census of 2013) and/or any plans to carry out a further census. A suggestion to meet with other Hertfordshire Councils’ IRPs was supported.

The Panel supported the recommendation that the basic allowance be increased by 1% on the grounds that:

- It was in line with the recent Officers’ pay rise;
- It was commensurate with other Hertfordshire Councils; and
- provision had been made for this increase within the medium term financial plan.

Special Responsibility Allowance

The Panel debated at length the merits of the multiplier used in relation to the Special Responsibility Allowance and its historical background, including the communications component. Panel Members supported the suggestion that amounts (in the sum of 50p) be rounded up or down to the nearest pound.

The Panel felt that applying the multiplier could make payments more complicated and supported the suggestion that, on this occasion, the Special Responsibility Allowance be increased by 1%, in line with the basic allowance. The Panel felt that this preserved important differentials in terms of responsibility and risk associated with certain roles and was transparent in its application.

The Panel accepted that the notion of a multiplier was valid but decided that it should be dis-applied this time, pending review.

The Panel supported a recommendation that the Special Responsibility Allowance be increased by 1% on the grounds that it:

- was in line with the increase in the basic allowance;
- it preserved important differentials in terms of responsibility, risk and reputational aspects associated with certain roles; and
- was transparent in its application.

The Panel discussed the proposal to pay £6,400 to the Chairmen of each new scrutiny committee. It was noted that the Leader had suggested not to include a recommendation for the Panel to consider remunerating the Vice Chairman of each of these (two) new committees.

The Panel considered whether £6,400 was a reasonable sum bearing in mind that the Committees' workload would be increased. It was noted that the Terms of Reference for each of those new scrutiny committees were currently being revised and would be submitted to Council on 10 May 2017 for approval.

The Panel, on the basis of the limited evidence available and in the absence of relevant updated Terms of Reference, supported the recommendation to pay the chairman of the new Scrutiny Committees £6,400 on the grounds that:

- the decision to reduce scrutiny committees from 5 to 2 would involve a greater workload for the two new committees;
- the committees would have a larger composition requiring of a Chairman, greater management, expertise and breadth of experience;
- the proposed sum of £6,400 was within the payment (benchmarked) range for other Special Responsibility Allowances.

The Panel discussed the proposal to increase child and dependent care allowance by 1% overall. Whilst recognising that it was important to encourage interest in Local

Government service from the wider public and the need to apply a consistent approach to Members’ allowances, the Panel did not support a recommendation to change the child and dependent care allowance but agreed that this be looked at as part of a wider review of allowances in the future.

The Panel considered the proposal to amend the provisions in relation to mileage allowances and agreed that this needed to be consistent with HMRC regulations. The Panel agreed to extend the terms of the mileage allowed from 45p for the first 50miles to 45p for the first 10,000 miles;

The Panel agreed that on this basis, there was no requirement for the provision relating to 25p after the first 50 miles and this should be discontinued.

The Panel considered the Special Responsibility Allowance additional payment of £270 paid to Development Management Committee Members to cover the use of their cars for site visits.

The Panel noted that Members could claim for any council business via the usual mileage allowance without a supplementary payment. The Panel sought further background information regarding why this sum had been initially instituted. The Monitoring Officer agreed to email the Panel Members with further information.

Following a review of the emailed information, the Panel agreed (via email) to recommend the cessation of the £270 to Members of Development Management Committee on grounds including that:

- Any member of the committee who uses his/her car for council business was entitled, without restriction, to claim 45p a mile from the council through an expenses claim;
- the continuation of the payment of £270 would be in conflict with the travel allowance which the Panel had agreed to extend in terms of the mileage allowed from 45p for the first 50miles to 45p for the

first 10,000 miles;

- the continuation of the payment of £270 would not be in line with the recommendation to extend the mileage that the Panel agreed;
- The Panel felt that cessation of this payment would be more compatible with the appropriate stewardship of public funds;
- After consideration, the Panel was not convinced that the payment could be justified. Any justification for continuing the payment needed to go beyond simply historical precedent.

The Panel supported the need to remove the requirement under the “approved duties point 4” of Appendix 2 of the scheme to obtain prior approval for attendance at meetings.

The issue of Subsistence and Refreshments for approved duties was discussed including the issue of overnight accommodation.

The Panel supported the proposed levels detailed in the report and supported the recommendation that the subsistence levels remain unchanged and that the scheme be amended by the inclusion of the words that in circumstances when overnight accommodation was needed, that this be “the most cost effective”.

The Panel agreed that the Members’ Allowance Scheme be reviewed next year following an in-depth review and consultation exercise.

RESOLVED – that the Panel recommend to Council that:

- an increase of 1% in the Basic Allowance, as detailed be supported;
- an increase of 1% in the Special Responsibility Allowance as detailed, be supported;

- that the Chairman of the new Scrutiny Committees should receive an allowance of £6,400;
- the allowance for child and dependent care remained unchanged, but that the allowance be reviewed as part of the consultation review;
- the mileage allowance for use of own motor car be 45p per mile up to 10,000 miles p.a.,
- the provision relating to 25p after the first 50 miles be discontinued;
- the payment of £270 to Members of Development Management Committee, cease;
- the requirement under the “approved duties at point 4” of Appendix 2 of the scheme be amended by the removal of having first to obtain prior approval for attendance at meetings;
- the proposed subsistence levels detailed in the report be implemented and that the subsistence scheme be amended by the inclusion of the sentence “the most cost effective” overnight accommodation;
- a consultation exercise be carried out, including an approach to the Local Government Association to review Members’ workload in order to ensure that the allowance remained fair and equitable; and
- the Members’ Allowance Scheme be subject to a more detailed review to consider the results of an in-depth consultation exercise.

The meeting closed at 12.55 pm