

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Member Remuneration Panel **Date:** Monday, 9 November 2009

Place: Group Room, Room 1.19, First Floor, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 5.00 - 6.45 pm

Members Present: D Jackman and S A Lye

Other Councillors:

Apologies:

Officers Present: I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive), G Lunnun (Assistant Director – Democratic Services)

1. CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

That S Lye be elected Chairman for the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2008 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel noted that it had been established to advise on the payment of allowances and expenses to District Councillors.

4. MEMBER REMUNERATION SCHEME - REVIEW

The Panel considered a report:

- (a) summarising the Government's guidance on local authority allowances;
- (b) setting out the Council's existing Remuneration Scheme and details of its implementation;
- (c) summarising the results of a survey undertaken in spring/summer 2008 on behalf of the Local Government Association and the Improvement and Development Agency in relation to Local Authority Members' Allowances.

The Panel discussed the existing allowances and options for changes.

RESOLVED:

Basic Allowance

- (1) That, having regard to the small difference between the current amount in the adopted scheme (£4,300 per annum) and (a) the average amount paid to similar councils in the same region (£4,505 per annum) and (b) the amount (£4,524 per annum) achieved by applying the current minimum adult weekly wage of £5.80 per hour to a 15 hour week, no change to be made to the amount of Basic Allowance;
- (2) That members entering into an agreement under the Council's Connectivity Scheme continue to receive as supplement to the Basic Allowance a sum of £500 per annum in their first year in office and £250 per annum in each subsequent year of their term of office;
- (3) That the Council be encouraged to review its level of implementation of the Basic Allowance, currently £3,150 per annum, as this is clearly considerably less than the amounts paid to councillors in similar authorities in the same region and it is considered there is a danger of under-valuing the role which may make it more difficult to attract potential candidates to stand for election in future;
- (4) That in view of the Government's decision to reject the recommendation of the Councillors' Commission to authorise Standards Committees to suspend and clawback part of the Basic Allowance where a member fails to fulfil their role, no steps be taken to introduce voluntary clawback;
- (5) That the Council continue to consider steps which could be taken to make members more accountable including the Member Development Programme promoted by the Improvement and Development Agency.

Special Responsibility Allowances

- (6) That, subject to (7) below, in view of the similarities in the amounts of Special Responsibility Allowances in the Council's current adopted scheme and those of similar authorities in the same region as the Council, no change be made to the amounts of Special Responsibility Allowances;
- (7) That in view of the infrequency of meetings of the Complaints Panel and the Staff Appeals Panel, the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Chairmen of those Panels and the Housing Appeals and Review Panel be changed to an amount of £110 per meeting held;
- (8) That having regard to the increased number of meetings of Licensing Sub-Committees and the nature of business undertaken at those meetings the Council be asked to note the disappointment of the Panel that steps have not been taken to change the arrangements for the election of Chairmen of those Sub-Committees as it is considered that a significant responsibility is currently not being recognised;
- (9) That in view of the changes made to Portfolio Holder responsibilities at the Council meeting in June 2009 it is considered that it would be premature to make any recommendations regarding the tiering of allowances to Cabinet Members based on workload and responsibilities and that the Council be

asked to indicate to the Panel when they would wish the Panel to pursue tiering based on proposed paired comparison role evaluation/member's SRA role description/budget summary sheets/manpower summary;

Co-optee Allowances

(10) That no change be made in the allowances for co-optees but that the Panel explore further the allowance paid to the Chairman of the Standards Committee and the other independent members on that Committee who chair Sub-Committees of the Standards Committee with a view to making recommendations during the next review of the scheme in order to recognise the new local assessment regime and the increased workload arising therefrom;

Travelling Allowance

(11) That the scheme be amended to include payment for Parish/Town Council representatives at meetings of the Local Highways Panel;

Subsistence Allowance

(12) That no change be made to the scheme in respect of Subsistence Allowance;

Carers' and Childcare Allowances

(13) That having regard to the average amounts in the schemes of similar authorities in the same region as this Council and to the ONS Annual Survey of Earnings, the scheme be amended to provide for the payment of Carers' and Childcare Allowances at a rate of £8.39 per hour subject to the conditions contained in the current scheme;

Member Role Accountability Statements

(14) That the Member Role Accountability Statements which have been revised in order to reflect the changing role of members be referred to an appropriate Panel for consideration;

Draft Report

(15) That a briefing session for members of the Panel with Group Leaders and members not affiliated to any group be arranged in order to discuss the Panel's draft report on the review of the Member Remuneration Scheme;

(16) That the draft report be finalised following that meeting, if necessary after a further meeting of the Panel.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL

Consideration was given to what further steps could be taken in order to fill the vacancy on the Panel. It was noted that a member of the Panel could not also be a member of the District Council or a member of a Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council. It was further noted that a member of the Panel was not to be disqualified from being or becoming a member of an authority.

RESOLVED:

That the officers arrange to place a public notice in appropriate media and that copies be sent to the Clerks of Town and Parish Councils in the District.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members considered the need for another meeting.

RESOLVED:

That officers consult with members of the Panel regarding the date for another meeting, if required.

CHAIRMAN