

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Member Remuneration Panel **Date:** Monday, 6 January 2014

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 8.15 - 8.40 pm

Members Present: D Jackman, Ms R Kelly and S A Lye

Other Councillors:

Apologies:

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

6. CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

That Ms R Kelly be elected Chairman for the meeting.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members of the Panel in relation to any item on the agenda.

8. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2013 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

9. REVIEW OF REMUNERATION SCHEME

The Panel gave further consideration to the recommendations to be included in its report to the Council in the light of discussions held with councillors who had responded to the invitation to submit observations/concerns about the current Scheme.

The Panel agreed to recommend discontinuance of the Connectivity Allowance with the £250 per member per annum being incorporated into the Basic Allowance, thereby effectively increasing the level of implementation of the Basic Allowance to £3,400 with little or no effect on the Council's budget.

The Panel also agreed to repeat the recommendations it had made in past years for a higher level of implementation of the Basic Allowance. Acknowledging the difficulty for the Council to approve an increase in the level of implementation it was agreed to suggest alternative approaches. Either an increase in 2015/16 to the full amount of £4,300 or a phased increase to achieve that figure over two financial years (approximately 90% of £4,300 in 2015/16 and 100% in 2016/17).

The Panel agreed that when undertaking its next review of the Scheme it would be beneficial to receive up to date comparative data from other similar authorities bearing in mind that the current allowances in the Council's Scheme had been set several years ago.

The Panel saw no reason to change its proposed wording amendments to the Scheme to reflect the requirements of HMRC in relation to the treatment of mileage and subsistence for taxation and National Insurance purposes. The Panel agreed to draw attention to the ability of individual councillors to challenge the position with HMRC.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the officers revise the Members' Allowances Scheme and a Guidance Note to reflect the further views of the Panel expressed at this meeting; and
- (2) That a draft report of the Panel and the amended Scheme and Guidance Note be circulated to Members of the Panel for approval prior to being submitted to the Council at its meeting in February 2014;
- (3) That the officers provide the Panel with up to date comparative data from other authorities when the Scheme is next reviewed.

10. DATA PROTECTION ACT - REGISTRATION OF COUNCILLORS AS DATA CONTROLLERS

The Panel was informed that under the Data Protection Act, individuals and organisations that processed personal information needed to register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), unless they were exempt.

The Panel noted that it was a matter for each member to determine whether they should notify as a Data Controller. Members should consider what personal information they held and processed in relation to their own constituency casework and, if necessary, submit formal notification to the Information Commissioner.

The Panel was informed that the Council's Data Protection Officer had pointed out that currently only 10 District Councillors had registered with the Information Commissioner and it had been suggested that this Panel should consider the issue from an allowances point of view.

The Assistant to the Chief Executive reported that the registration fee was £35.00 per annum and that some councils reimbursed their councillors' annual fees upon submission of a claim supported by relevant documentation. However, the approach at this Council had always been that the fees should be met from the Basic Allowance.

The Panel considered whether in an attempt to secure more registrations, the £35 of Basic Allowance should be withheld each year until a member produced evidence of registration as a Data Controller. They noted that the difficulty with this approach was that some councillors might decide that they did not need to register as Data Controllers.

In the light of the comparatively small sum involved the Panel decided to recommend that the level of implementation of the Basic Allowance should be increased by a

further £35 per annum per member with members being advised of the requirements for registration and the risks of not registering. As a result therefore the Council would be recommended to increase the level of implementation of the Basic Allowance in 2014/15 to £3,435 and not £3,400 as agreed earlier at this meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the report to the Council incorporate a recommendation to increase the level of implementation of the Basic Allowance for 2014/15 to £3,435 with a view to increasing Data Controller registrations with the Information Commissioner.

CHAIRMAN