

## **EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**Committee:** Member Remuneration Panel                      **Date:** Monday, 9 March 2015

**Place:** Conference Room, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping                      **Time:** 6.30 - 7.00 pm

**Members Present:** D Jackman and S A Lye

**Other Councillors:**

**Apologies:** Ms R Kelly

**Officers Present:** S G Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)) and S Tautz (Democratic Services Manager)

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### **11. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That S. Lye be elected as Chairman of the Panel for the duration of the meeting.

### **12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### **13. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (6 JANUARY 2014)**

#### **RESOLVED:**

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

### **14. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME - SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES**

The Panel was advised that a review had recently been undertaken of the Council's overview and scrutiny panel framework, in light of the adoption of its new management structure in December 2013.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that a new framework, substantially aligned with the management structure, had been agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and that this involved the deletion of the existing Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel from 2015/16. Members noted that the Scrutiny Panel was responsible for the ongoing maintenance and review of the Council's constitution, and had recently commenced a root and branch review of the constitution, which has not been undertaken for a considerable number of years. The Democratic Services Manager reported that this work was not anticipated to be completed until March 2016.

Members were advised that it was intended that the Scrutiny Panel would be re-established as a 'Constitution Working Group' from the next municipal year, in order to complete its review of the constitution. It was likely that, on completion of the review of the constitution in 2016, the Working Group would only then meet as occasionally necessary to consider specific constitutional issues, as it was anticipated that no similar review of the constitution would then be required for a number of years. The Democratic Services Manager reported that the responsibilities of the former scrutiny panel in relation to members' services, would be transferred to a new 'Governance Select Committee' also established as part of the review of the overview and scrutiny framework.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that the review of the constitution was an important and complex piece of work and that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had recommended that a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) should be applied to the position of the Chairman of the new Working Group. The Panel noted that the current Members' Allowances Scheme provided for an SRA of £2,150 per annum to be made to the chairmen of each of the standing scrutiny panels, which included the Chairman of the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel. The Panel understood that, as a result of the disbandment of the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel, the allocation of the proposed SRA to the Chairman of the Constitution Working Group would be cost neutral in terms of the Council's budget. The Panel agreed however, that such SRA should be reviewed after the completion of the current review of the constitution, given that it was likely that the new Working Group would only need to meet infrequently thereafter.

The Assistant Director (Governance and Performance Management) reported to the Panel in connection with arrangements for the future review of the Remuneration and Expenses Scheme, which would also need to reflect the revisions to the overview and scrutiny panel framework. The Panel requested that, as part of its report to the Council in connection with the proposed allocation of an SRA to the Chairman of the Constitution Working Group, that members be invited to raise issues or concerns about the current Members' Allowances Scheme and that comparative data be obtained on the member allowances made by other similar local authorities, in order that the report could constitute a review of the Scheme for 2015/16. The Panel agreed that any issues arising from this process be considered informally amongst members, or by way of a further meeting if necessary.

The Panel was advised that, as in previous years, it was intended to commence a fuller review of the Members' Allowances Scheme (for 2016/17) during September 2015.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That all members be invited to raise issues or concerns about the current Members' Allowances Scheme for the Panel to consider as part of its annual review of the Scheme for 2015/16;**
- (2) That the Democratic Services Manager seek to obtain comparative data on the levels of member allowances made by other similar local authorities;**
- (3) That, if necessary, an additional meeting of the Panel be held to consider issues arising from (1) and (2) above;**
- (4) That, subject to Recommendations (1)-(3) above, a report be made to the Council recommending:**

- (a) that no change be made to the amount of Basic Allowance of £4,300 per member per annum currently included in the Members' Allowances Scheme;
  - (b) that in formulating future budgets, the Council consider increasing further the level of implementation of the Basic Allowance to achieve the full amount of £4,300;
  - (c) that no change be made to the current amounts of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) currently included in the Members' Allowances Scheme;
  - (d) that an SRA of £2,150 be applied to the position of the Chairman of the Constitution Working Group for 2015/16;
  - (e) that the application of the SRA for the Chairman of the Constitution Working Group for 2016/17, be further reviewed by the Panel during 2015/16; and
- (5) That the Members' Allowances Scheme and Guidance Note for 2015/16 be revised to reflect the recommendations of the Panel and the new overview and scrutiny framework, and be recommended to the Council for adoption and implementation with effect from 28 May 2015; and
- (6) That the report of the Panel be presented to the Council by S. Lye.

**15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Panel agreed that a further meeting be held on a date to be arranged during September 2015, to commence a full review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2016/17.

**CHAIRMAN**