

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

**Committee:** Member Remuneration Panel                      **Date:** 20 July 2017

**Place:** Committee Room 2, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping                      **Time:** 6.30 - 8.10 pm

**Members Present:** Ms R Kelly and S Lye

**Other Councillors:** R Bassett, J Lea, B Sandler, M Sartin and D Stallan

**Apologies:** D Jackman

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

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### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That Ms. R. Kelly be elected as Chairman of the Remuneration Panel for the duration of the meeting.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made by members of the Panel, pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (28.9.16)**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 28 September 2016, be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **4. CHAIRMAN & VICE-CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL - SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCE**

The Panel was reminded that, at its meeting in December 2015, the Council had agreed that consideration of the amount of Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) applied to the positions of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, be added to the responsibilities of the Remuneration Panel from the 2017/18 municipal year. The Director of Governance reported that the Panel had requested an opportunity to gain an understanding of the current application of SRA in terms of the responsibilities of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, in order that the level of SRA could be considered as part of the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2018/19 and subsequent years.

The current Chairman (Councillor D. Stallan) and Vice-Chairman (Councillor R. Bassett) of the Council attended the meeting to assist the Panel to gain an understanding of their roles and responsibilities, alongside a number of serving past-Chairmen of the Council who were able to contribute first-hand experience with regard to the current level of SRA for the positions. Members advised that Panel that chairmanship of the Council was an honoured position, reserved to councillors that had earned the respect of their colleagues across the authority.

Members were advised that the Chairman was formally appointed to office at the first meeting of the Council in each municipal year and had a number of specific roles and responsibilities, including:

- chairing meetings of the Council so that the business of the authority was carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of all Councillors and the interests of the community;
- ensuring that Council meetings were a forum for the debate of matters of concern to the local community and for promoting public involvement in the Council's activities;
- being the First Citizen of the District and attending civic and ceremonial functions to promote the Council and act as a focal point for the community;
- hosting functions in order to promote the Council and its interests; and
- promoting a charity appeal during their term of office.

The Panel was advised that the Vice-Chairman of the Council played an important part in supporting the Civic Ceremonial role of the Chairman and that custom and practice had dictated that, in most instances, the Chairman of Council had previously served a year as Vice-Chairman. The past-Chairmen in attendance all considered that the experience gained during their year as Vice-Chairman had been invaluable preparation for their term of office as Chairman. It was also noted that, at times, the role of the Vice-Chairman could take on additional prominence where, for example, the Chairman became unavailable due to illness or family commitments.

The Director of Governance reported to the Panel with regard to the background to the current level of SRA for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, which had last been reviewed by the Governance Select Committee in December 2015. The Panel noted that appropriate benchmarking had been undertaken in respect of the levels of SRA applied by other district local authorities in Essex and the Council's 'family group' of comparable authorities. The Panel noted that, in a number of instances, such SRA levels in other areas were based on multipliers of the Basic Allowance made to members.

Several of the past-Chairmen of the Council in attendance at the meeting felt that the current application of SRA did not adequately meet the expenses incurred in undertaking duties as Chairman, particularly in relation to travel and clothing arrangements. Most of the past-Chairmen also indicated that they had incurred personal financial expenditure during their term of office, for which they had not been recompensed by the Council (or had not sought such recompense).

The Panel was advised that recompense for transport costs incurred by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman in relation to official duties, had been addressed by Governance Select Committee in its earlier review of allowances. The Director of Governance reported that, in addition to the individual SRA for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, ongoing annual budget provision was made to directly support their work, covering matters such as hire cars and taxis, civic hospitality and miscellaneous expenses such as the annual Civic Awards Reception, Christmas Carol Service and Chairman's Lunch. It was noted however, that the scope and

volume of other engagements for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman varied from year to year depending on the number and type of invitations accepted. Members emphasised that external factors such as family, work and voluntary commitments had an impact upon the time that the Chairman could devote to civic ceremonial duties and that each Chairman adopted their own personal approach to the Chairman's Charity, with different levels of commitment and support from external organisations.

As the current Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council and a number of the past-Chairmen in attendance had also held executive positions with the authority, the Panel was keen to understand how the duties of the Chairman compared with those of other positions such as Portfolio Holder, chairmen of committees and sub-committees etc., specifically in terms of responsibility and time commitment, and whether these positions could be subject to a 'ranking' for the purposes of SRA. Many of the members present at the meeting considered that the duties of the Chairman were much more time consuming than other positions, particularly in terms of attendance at civic and ceremonial functions whilst also maintaining a constituency role for the local communities they represented.

Some members felt that, unlike most other roles within the Council, the civic ceremonial role of the Chairman was defined to a large extent by the character and interests of the individual Chairman, as each brought their own personality and style to the role, with varying degrees of personal capacity and resources.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman expressed appreciation for the valuable contribution of the current Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council and those serving past Chairmen of the Council that attended the meeting, in increasing its understanding of the role and responsibilities of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the background to the level of Special Responsibility Allowance currently applied to the positions of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, be noted; and
- (2) That the Director of Governance be requested to submit the following additional information to the next meeting of the Panel, in order that the current level of Special Responsibility Allowance can be considered as part of the review of the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme for 2018/19:
  - (a) general information regarding the type and number of events and functions typically attended or supported by the Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman of the Council during a municipal year;
  - (b) the 'information pack' produced for the Chairman for each municipal year; and
  - (c) if possible, the views of those serving past Chairmen of the Council that were unable to attend the meeting, with regard to the current level of Special Responsibility Allowance for the positions of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council.

**5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Director of Governance reported that there was no other business for consideration at the meeting.

**6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The panel agreed that its next meeting be arranged on a date to be agreed during October 2017.

**CHAIRMAN**