

Report to Remuneration Panel

Date of meeting: 27 January 2021

Subject: Members' Allowances Scheme – Annual Review 2021/22

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That the Panel consider the issues set out in this report and agree any recommendations to be made to the Council in connection with its review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2021/22; and

(2) That the Panel agree arrangements for the presentation of its report and recommendations with regard to the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme to the Council, at its meeting to be held on 18 February 2021.

Report:

1. The Panel undertakes a review of Epping Forest District Council's Members' Allowances Scheme each year, to ensure that any recommendations for revision to elements of the Scheme can be considered alongside the preparation of the authority's budget for the following financial year. The current Members' Allowances Scheme, for the 2020/21 municipal year, was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 17 December 2019 and is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

Members' Allowances Scheme

2. In considering the recommendations of the Panel in December 2019, the Council agreed that no change be made to the payment of the full amount of Basic Allowance of £4,300.00 per member per annum to be included in the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2018/19. An increase in Basic Allowance was introduced from 2016/17 in line with the recommendations of the Panel over several years, that the authority should implement 100% of the amount of Basic Allowance for each member, rather than the level of 80% previously applied.

3. The Council also agreed in December 2015 that, from the 2016/17 municipal year, 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. Whilst no recommendations in this regard were made for 2019/20, the level of such SRA should therefore be considered as part of the Panel's review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2020/21.

4. As part of the review process for 2020/21, a general invitation was extended to all members of the Council on behalf of the Panel, to express any suggestions or concerns about the current operation of the Members' Allowances Scheme. At the time of the preparation of this report, no representations arising from such invitation have been received from members. Any representations received after the publication of the agenda for this meeting will be reported to the Panel at the meeting.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Restructure

5. The Panel was advised at its last meeting that, with effect from the commencement of the 2019/20 municipal year, the Council adopted a structure of three new overview and

scrutiny select committees, replacing the former structure of four select committees. The new select committees are:

- Stronger Communities Select Committee;
- Stronger Council Select Committee; and
- Stronger Place Select Committee.

6. The current Members' Allowances Scheme provides that an annual SRA of £2,150.00 be applied to the positions of the chairmen of the select committees. The reduction of the overview and scrutiny framework to the three new select committees has therefore generated a saving to the current budget provision for members' allowances.

Other Matters

7. No suggestions or concerns about the current operation of the Members' Allowances Scheme have been received from members. If any are received following the publication of the agenda then they will be reported to the Panel. The following issue for consideration by the Panel has been identified during the current municipal year and is addressed in the following paragraphs of this report.

(a) Council Members of the Qualis Board

8. The Cabinet agreed at its meeting in September 2020 that two members of the Qualis Board should be members of the Council. The Cabinet agreed the remuneration levels for the other members of the Qualis Board, which are specifically paid for the responsibilities and time associated with nomination to the Board and do not represent a salary for employment. However, the Cabinet felt that Council members nominated to the Board would need to be remunerated in accordance with the recommendation of the independent Members' Remuneration Panel, as determined at its next meeting. This would be in keeping with the legislation applying to member appointments and reflected their elected status.

9. In the meantime, a Special Responsibility Allowance equivalent to that of a Cabinet Member has been paid by Qualis in recognition of the additional time and responsibility associated with this role. The Panel are requested to consider this new role and what level of allowance should be payable for any Councillor members of the Qualis Board. The remuneration agreed for the other roles on the Qualis Board are set out below:

Role	Remuneration
Independent Non-Executive Director - Chair	£1000 per day, based on one day per week and up to a maximum of an additional 25 days per year dependent on workload.
Council Officer Appointee	£500 per day, one day per week
Qualis Executive Directors x 4	£500 per day, one day per week
Independent Non-Executive Directors x 2	£500 per day, one day per week
Council Members x 2	To be determined by the Independent Members Remuneration Panel

Benchmarking

10. At its meeting on 29 November 2018, the Panel requested that a comprehensive benchmarking exercise amongst comparable local authorities be undertaken as part of the Panel's review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 200/21, in order to assess whether an inflationary increase in the level of Basic Allowance should be considered;

11. The results of the benchmarking exercise has been prepared and is attached as an Appendix to this report.

Recommendations

12. The Panel is requested to consider the issues set out in this report and to agree the general matters to be subject of its recommendations to the Council in connection with the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2020/21. This includes the level of remuneration considered appropriate for Councillor appointees to the Qualis Board.

13. It is intended that the report of the Panel will be made to the Council at its meeting on 18 February 2021. The Panel is also therefore requested to agree which of its membership will present the report to the Council.