

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Member Remuneration Panel **Date:** Thursday, 27 March 2008

Place: Group Room, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 5.00 - 5.55 pm

Members Present: D Jackman and S A Lye

Other Councillors:

Apologies:

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

9. CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

That S Lye be elected Chairman for the meeting.

10. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel noted that at its meeting on 12 November 2007, the Cabinet had requested the Panel to undertake a comprehensive review of the current Members' Remuneration Scheme and to make recommendations for changes to be implemented at the commencement of the 2008-09 municipal year.

11. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2008 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12. MEMBER REMUNERATION SCHEME - REVIEW

The Panel considered a draft report to be submitted to the Council following their review at the last meeting of the District Council's Remuneration Scheme.

Members discussed further the proposals for withholding or clawing back part of the Basic Allowance for councillors who failed to perform their role adequately. They determined in the light of comments made in the report of the Councillors' Commission "Representing the Future" that there was doubt about the legal authority to operate such arrangements. In coming to this conclusion they took account of the fact that the former attendance allowance paid prior to 2000 had been abolished by the Government and that the re-introduction of an attendance element into the

allowance would be contrary to that decision. They also noted that withholding an element of the Basic Allowance to certain members would contradict the requirement that the allowance be paid to all members in an equal amount.

The Panel also drew attention to the need for personal performance standards, targets and development plans for councillors in order to implement such a scheme.

In the light of these issues the Panel decided not to recommend proposals for withholding or clawing back part of the Basic Allowance. However, they decided that this possibility should be considered again when the Council's Scheme is next reviewed by which time the recommendations of the Councillors' Commission might have been adopted by the Government and become a legal requirement. The Panel further agreed that the Council should be advised of the Panel's current ideas for withholding part of the allowance if this were to be introduced. The Panel decided to recommend that in order to maintain public confidence in the performance of councillors, the Council should publish once a year the attendance records of all members.

Following a discussion on the Special Responsibility Allowances for Cabinet members, the Chairman of the meeting agreed to expand that section of the report by explaining ways in which different amounts could be determined.

The Panel gave further consideration to the recommendation formulated at their previous meeting for Special Responsibility Allowances for the Chairmen of Area Plans Sub-Committees in the light of the Council's decision to schedule meetings on a three week cycle instead of a four week cycle resulting in an increase of approximately five meetings per annum for each Sub-Committee. Taking account of the number of applications determined by the Sub-Committees during the last few years, the Panel concluded that the three week cycle would not result in a greater workload and was being introduced in an effort to improve performance. As such the Panel determined that the introduction of the three week cycle did not justify an increased Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairmen of the Sub-Committees.

The Panel considered and agreed revised allowances for co-opted members.

RESOLVED:

That the officers amend the draft report to incorporate the further views of the Panel.

13. REMUNERATION PANEL - ANNUAL REPORT(S)

The Assistant to the Chief Executive advised that annual reports of the Member Remuneration Panel and the Parish Remuneration Panel were being prepared for submission to the Annual meeting of the Council.

14. BRIEFING FOR COUNCILLORS

The Panel agreed that it would be beneficial to brief councillors on the contents of their report reviewing the Member Remuneration Scheme prior to the report being considered at the Annual Council meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the officers arrange for:
 - (a) a briefing session for the Leader of the Council; and
 - (b) a briefing session for all Group Leaders, Deputy Group Leaders and unaffiliated members of the Council;
- (2) That the members invited to the briefing sessions be provided with a copy of the Panel's final report prior to those briefings on the understanding that the report is to be regarded as confidential until it is published as part of the business to be transacted at the Annual Council meeting; and
- (3) That the officers prepare some slides to aid the Panel in presenting their report at the briefing sessions.

CHAIRMAN