

Report to the Council

Report of: Assistant to the Chief Executive

Date: 23 April 2013

Subject: Independent and Parish Remuneration Panels – Payment of Allowances

1. DISTRICT/PARISH REMUNERATION PANELS – ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES

RECOMMENDATION:

That, pursuant to Regulation 20(3) of the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) England Regulations 2003, provision be made for the payment of an allowance of £250 per annum for each member of the Remuneration Panel plus expenses payable at a rate equivalent to the allowances and expenses applicable to Councillors with effect from 1 May 2013.

Background

1. The Council is required to appoint District and Parish Remuneration Panels to advise on remuneration scheme for members. The Council has two such Panels at the present time comprising 3 independent members who volunteered to undertake this role after public advertisement and interview. One Panel deal with the District council and the second advises on remuneration for Parish and Town Councils.
2. At the Council meeting on 19 February 2013, the Panel submitted an annual report on its activities over the last year and submitted recommendations on some alterations to the District Council's scheme. The Panel also asked for a review of their own remuneration level (currently set at £500.00 per annum) as they felt that this level of payment was no longer justified in the light of current levels of activity.
3. The £500.00 allowance was agreed by the Council in May 2008 when these Panels were meeting more frequently in order to formulate new remuneration schemes for this Council and the Parish Councils. Now that the schemes are established, the requirement to hold meetings had declined in their view and discussions now take place on an annual basis where items raised by the Council are considered and reports submitted. Any necessary consultation is also dealt with.
4. At the February Council meeting, members also agreed levels of payment in respect of the newly-appointed independent persons who are affiliated to the Standards Committee. In those cases, the agreed allowance was £250.00 subject to further review once the new standards arrangements are fully operational. The task of assessing and reporting on a revised allowance for the Remuneration Panel members was delegated to the Assistant to the Chief Executive.
5. Research via the internet on practices adopted by other councils in respect of their Panels has been carried out. This concentrated on other equivalent district and borough councils but avoided County Councils and Unitary Authorities as these were not regarded as comparable. The research indicates that there are many and varied practices adopted by Councils.

6. In summary, arrangements seem to fall into the following categories:
 - (a) unpaid appointments;
 - (b) expenses only, occasionally coupled with a small payment on an annual basis or per meeting. Those payments are generally in the order of £30.00 - £40.00;
 - (c) Annual payments of between £200.00 - £550.00 per annum.
7. Of the two Essex authorities had revealed data through internet searches, the amounts payable were in the range £425.00 - £500.00 per annum and in the third instance, expenses only.
8. Against this background, the £500.00 per annum payment which currently operates for the Epping Forest Panels is not exceptional in relation to those in category (c) above. However, respecting the wish of the members of the Panels to review the amount payable, it is recommended that the new rate, with effect from 1 May 2013, should be set at £250.00, which places the payments to the Panel at the same level as those for the independent person. The payment would apply to work undertaken for the two Panels and would be at the lower end of the allowances paid under category (c) above.
9. It is considered that no payment or expenses only should not be an option in this case. The three Panel members live in or reasonably close to Epping and the Council needs to bear in mind the impact of such a policy if the authority to have to re-advertise for one or more of these positions.
10. The Council is asked to agree this figure.
11. **Resource Implications**

The total amount allocated within the remuneration budget will be reduced to £750 in respect of these allowances . Currently the figure is £1,500.

I Willett
Assistant to the Chief Executive.