

Report to Member Remuneration Panel

Date of meeting: 20 July 2017



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Subject: Chairman & Vice-Chairman of Council - Special Responsibility Allowance

Responsible Officer: S. Tautz (01992) 564180

Democratic Services Officer: S. Tautz (01992) 564180

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Panel consider the background to the Special Responsibility Allowance currently applied to the positions of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, with a view to the consideration of the level of such allowance as part of the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2018/19 and future years.

Report:

1. (Director of Governance) As the Panel will be aware, its annual review of the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme commences in September each year, in order to ensure that recommendations for revision to elements of the Scheme are considered before the authority's budget is approved for the following financial year. The report of the Panel with regard to the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2017/18 was considered by the Council on 20 December 2016.
2. The Council agreed at its meeting in December 2015 that, from the 2017/18 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. As part of its recent report, the Panel made no recommendation for change to the level of such SRA for 2017/18, but has 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 can be considered as part of its review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2018/19 and subsequent years.

Chairman of the Council

3. The Chairman is formally appointed to office at the first meeting of the Council in each municipal year. The Chairman of the Council represents the authority at civic and ceremonial events and is the First Citizen of the District, taking precedence over all other citizens, other than in situations when Royalty or the Lord Lieutenant visits the District.
4. The Chairman chairs full meetings of the Council in accordance with the Constitution of the authority, ensuring that proceedings are conducted in a fair and impartial manner. The Chairman cannot be a member of the Cabinet, although they may be a member of any of the Council's committees or other regulatory and decision-making bodies, but only in their capacity as an ordinary member of the authority.

5. At the request of the Panel, the current Chairman (Councillor D. Stallan) and Vice-Chairman (Councillor R. Bassett) of the Council have been invited to attend the meeting to assist it to gain an understanding of their roles and responsibilities. A general invitation has additionally been extended to all serving past Chairmen of the Council to also attend the meeting, to express any suggestions or concerns with regard to the application of SRA for the positions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the authority.

Benchmarking

6. The Director of Governance will report to the Panel with regard to the background to the current level of SRA for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, which was last reviewed by the Governance Select Committee in December 2015. A copy of the report considered by the Select Committee at that time is attached as Appendix 1 to this agenda.
7. Benchmarking was undertaken during 2016 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 results of this exercise are attached as Appendix 2. In a number of instances, SRA levels are based on multipliers of the Basic Allowance made to members.
8. A number of those local authorities with which benchmarking have been undertaken operate a 'mayoral' structure. Local authorities that have been granted Borough status have no more powers than District Councils, but the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Borough Councils have the right to be styled as a 'Mayor' and 'Deputy Mayor'. However, these remain civic and ceremonial roles and none of the councils that have provided benchmarking information have an elected mayor responsible for exercising powers and functions. All such authorities are therefore regarded to be roughly similar.
9. Mr. S. Lye of the Remuneration Panel has previously submitted some observations in relation to a possible future approach the application of Special Responsibility Allowance to the positions of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council. These are attached as Appendix 3 to this report.

Recommendation

10. The Panel is requested to consider the background to the level of SRA currently applied to the positions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, with a view to the assessment of such allowance as part of the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2018/19 and future years.