

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Member Remuneration Panel **Date:** Thursday, 29 November 2018

Place: Conference Room, Civic Offices,
High Street, Epping **Time:** 6.30 - 8.00 pm

Members Present: Mrs. T Finn, Mr. D Jackman, Mr. S Lye

Officers Present: S Hill (Service Director (Governance & Member Services)), S Tautz (Democratic Services Manager)

13. REMUNERATION PANEL - APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER

The Panel welcomed Tina Finn to the meeting as a new member of the Remuneration Panel. The Democratic Services Manager reported that the Council had formally ratified the appointment of Mrs. Finn at its meeting on 1 November 2018 and members and officers of the Panel introduced themselves to Mrs. Finn.

The Democratic Services Manager and Service Director (Governance and Member Services) provided an induction presentation on the role and responsibilities of the Remuneration Panel.

14. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Democratic Services Manager reminded members that there was no appointed chairman of the Panel, as the appointment of a chairman was agreed at each meeting.

RESOLVED:

That S. Lye be elected as Chairman of the Panel for the duration of the meeting.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests in any item on the agenda for the meeting were declared by members of the Panel, pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

16. TERMS OF REFERENCE

17. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 30 October 2017 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

18. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME - ANNUAL REVIEW 2019/20

The Democratic Services Manager reminded the Panel that the annual review of the Council's Member Allowances Scheme commenced in September each year, in order to ensure that recommendations for revision to elements of the Scheme could be considered by the time that the authority's budget was approved for the following financial year.

Members noted that, to commence the review process for 2019/20, a general invitation had been extended to all elected and co-opted members of the Council on behalf of the Panel, to express any suggestions or concerns with regard to the current operation of the allowances scheme. The Democratic Services Manager reported that one representation had been received as a result of such invitation.

Members' Allowances Scheme

The Panel was reminded that, at its meeting on 15 December 2016, the Council had agreed the implementation of 100% of the amount of Basic Allowance for each member with effect from the commencement of the 2016/17 municipal year, in line with the recommendations of the Panel over a number of years..

Basic Allowance

The Democratic Services Manager reported that, in considering the recommendations of the Panel in December 2016, the Council had 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, following an increase in the implementation rate of the Basic Allowance from 2016/17 in line with the recommendations of the Panel that the authority should implement 100% of the amount of Basic Allowance for each member, rather than the level of 80% previously applied.

The Panel did not consider it necessary to recommend any further changes to the application of Basic Allowance for 2019/20. However, members' considered that it would be appropriate to continue to revisit the application of Basic Allowance as part of the annual review of the Members' Allowances Scheme, notwithstanding that the implementation of any increase would be a matter for the Council to determine and that there remained a continued need for restraint in the setting of the authority's annual budget. The panel requested that a benchmarking exercise be undertaken amongst comparable local authorities as part of its review of the Members' Allowances Scheme in 2019, in order to assess whether an inflationary increase in the level of Basic Allowance, linked to recent local government pay awards, should be considered.

Special Responsibility Allowance

The Panel did not consider that it was necessary to make any changes to the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) applied to various member positions for 2018/19, as there had been no change in such responsibilities since the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for the current year. However, the Panel wished to encourage the Council to increase the implementation level of the relevant allowances identified in the Members' Allowances Scheme, in order to achieve the full amount of each allowance as soon as possible.

The Panel was advised that the Council would shortly be considering options for the review of the existing framework of its overview and scrutiny select committees. Members considered that any reduction in the number of select committees would have the effect of generating savings to the current budget provision for members'

allowances and could present opportunities to progress the application of the full level of SRA previously agreed by the Council. The Panel therefore requested that it be kept apprised of the Council's intentions with regard to any restructure proposals that directly affected the application of SRA for specific member roles and responsibilities reflected in the Members' Allowances Scheme.

Group Leaders - Special Responsibility Allowance

The Panel considered a proposal of Councillor R. Brookes in relation to the application of Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) to the leaders of the constituted political groups on the Council, to recognise the time commitment required of Group Leaders. In support of her submission, Councillor Brookes suggested that Group Leaders had given a lot of extra time on panels and local plan workshops etc. over the last year and had rarely missed meetings.

The Panel was advised that Group Leader appointments were made by the constituted political groups and not by the Council and that Group Leaders had no formal role or responsibility within the authority. The Democratic Services Manager reported that, whilst formal meetings of Group Leaders as a consultative body were held during the period in which the Council had no overall political control, these were not currently held on a routine or programmed basis. The Panel was advised that Group Leaders (and Deputy Group Leaders) were members of the Appointments Panel, which made recommendations to the Council each year on nominations for appointment to committees etc. from the political groups and non-affiliated members. The Democratic Services Manager reported that such councillors could claim normal travelling expenses for attendance at meetings of the Panel, which were usually held on a maximum of two occasions in each municipal year.

The Panel was reminded that it had previously considered similar proposals for the application of SRA to councillors attending a specified number of meetings. However, it continued to be of the view that this approach not be pursued, in view of the difficulty involved in drawing up a workable scheme that could be monitored efficiently. The Panel considered benchmarking information that established that some local authorities awarded annual SRA to Group Leaders, including the leaders of majority political groups, although such application of SRA was not universal across comparable authorities. The Panel did not consider that this approach was appropriate at the present time, as no justification had been made to support the allocation of significant additional responsibility to Group Leaders. The panel indicated however, that it would be willing to give further consideration to this issue as part of its next review of the Members' Allowances Scheme, should it have misunderstood the role of Group Leaders or on the submission of additional evidence to highlight the role of Group Leaders in the formal operation of the business of the Council.

Staff Appeals Panel - Special Responsibility Allowance

The Panel was advised that, at its meeting in September 2018, the Council had adopted a new Staff Appeals Procedure Policy, which had resulted in the cessation of the operation of the Staff Appeals Panel. The Democratic Services Manager reported that the Members' Allowances Scheme currently provided for the award of Special Responsibility Allowance of £110.00 to be made to the Chairman of the Staff Appeals Panel for any meeting held during each municipal year and that, as a result of the cessation of the operation of the Staff Appeals Panel, such SRA should be removed from the Members' Allowances Scheme from 2019/20.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the following recommendations be made to the Council at its meeting on 20 December 2018, in connection with the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2019/20:

Members' Allowances Scheme

Basic Allowance

- (a) That, for the 2019/20 municipal year, no change be made to the level of Basic Allowance of £4,300.00 per member per annum, currently included in the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme;

Special Responsibility Allowance

- (b) That the award of Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairman of the Staff Appeals Panel be removed from the Members' Allowances Scheme from the 2019/20 municipal year;
- (c) That for the 2019/20 municipal year, no other changes be made to the application or implementation of the Special Responsibility Allowances currently included in the Members' Allowances Scheme;
- (d) That the Council be encouraged to increase the implementation level of Special Responsibility Allowance applied to the responsibilities identified in the Members' Allowances Scheme, in order to achieve the full amount of each allowance as soon as possible;

Revised Scheme and Guidance

- (e) That, subject to the above recommendations and other administrative matters set out in the report considered by the Panel, the Members' Allowances Scheme and Guidance for 2019/20 be adopted and implemented with effect from 24 May 2019;
- (f) That the Statement of Implementation of the Special Responsibility Allowances set out in the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2019/20, be agreed;
- (2) That a comprehensive benchmarking exercise amongst comparable local authorities be undertaken as part of the Panel's review of the Members' Allowances Scheme in 2019, to assess whether an inflationary increase in the level of Basic Allowance should be considered;
- (3) That the Council be requested to keep the Panel apprised of any future restructure proposals that directly affect the application of Special Responsibility Allowance for the specific member roles and responsibilities currently reflected in the Members' Allowances Scheme; and
- (4) That the report of the Panel be presented to the Council by S. Lye.

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

On behalf of the Remuneration Panel, the Chairman expressed the appreciation of members to Simon Hill (Service Director (Governance and Member Services)), the current lead officer for the Members Allowances Scheme, who was shortly to leave the Council after many years of service to the authority.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Panel agreed that it was not necessary to consider arrangements for future meetings at the present time.

CHAIRMAN

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