

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Democratic Services Manager

TO: Civic Affairs Committee

26/6/2015

WARDS: None directly affected

REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to the process for reviewing the Members' Allowances Scheme during 2015/16.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To comment and then agree on the Panel's Terms of Reference as in paragraph 3.7
- 2.2 To agree the approach to recruiting the Panel as set out in paragraph 3.9

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Committee at its meeting on 18 March agreed that it was appropriate to review the allowances scheme and in agreeing to the review was not committing to any changes that may be proposed by it.

3.2 The provision of allowances to members is covered by the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. It is for each local authority to decide its allowances scheme and the amounts to be paid under that scheme. An Independent Remuneration Panel provides the authority with advice on its allowances scheme and the amounts to be paid. The local authority must have regard to this advice.

3.3 The Independent Remuneration Panel last reported in March 2011. However, the Scheme has remained unchanged since 2008/09 and some

of the principles of the current scheme go back to the first scheme under the new Regulations first adopted in 2002/03.

The work programme

3.4 The Panel's work will be overseen by the Director of Customer and Community Services with officer support by the Executive Assistant to the Leader and Members and the Democratic Services Manager. The timetable will be:

- Panel recruitment/induction- July onwards
- Panel evidence gathering- September to November
- draft report issued to all Group Leaders for comment/clarifications - December
- final report to Civic Affairs Committee- 17 February 2016
- recommendation from Civic Affairs Committee to Council- 14 April 2016

3.5 At least one member of the Panel will present its report to Committee on 17 February 2016.

3.6 How the Panel conducts its business will be a matter for it with advice and support by officers, however there will be evidence gathering, comparison with other schemes and requests to hear evidence from individual councillors and group representatives. Councillor Hart's reference at previous civic affairs committee meetings to the area committees special responsibility allowance will be picked up, as the Panel will be looking 'afresh' at all allowances and the basis upon which they are paid.

3.7 The terms of reference of the last Panel, listed below, still appear relevant but the committee is asked to comment and amend if it wishes to:

"To recommend a scheme to the Council which-

- i) recognises that councillors undertake council work for the sake of public service and not private gain
- ii) recognises in both basic and special responsibility allowances the varying demands placed upon councillors, dependent upon their roles and responsibilities
- iii) fairly and equitably compensates councillors, so far as the Panel thinks appropriate, for the time and effort they can reasonably be expected to devote to their work as a councillor
- iv) is economic, efficient to administer and effective
- v) is easy to understand and explain

- vi) recognises the level of out of pocket expenses councillors incur
- vii) has flexibility to reflect changes of responsibilities of councillors during the course of the year”

3.8 The Panel will make recommendations on:

- the level of basic allowance
- which roles should receive a special responsibility allowance
- what childcare and dependent care allowance should be
- what duties should travel and subsistence apply to
- a co-opted member allowance
- whether allowances can be backdated
- whether annual adjustments may be made with reference to an index and if so for how long

The composition of the Independent Remuneration Panel

3.9 A Panel must have a minimum of three members. The current Panel has been dormant for over four years and it is recommended that a new Panel is formed. It is important that the Panel convened to do this work has both the confidence of councillors in being able to understand their roles, but also the people of Cambridge in being properly independent. It is therefore proposed that one member should be the Independent Person or Deputy Independent Person with the two other members, who must have a local connection to the city, appointed by the Director of Customer and Community Services in consultation with the Chair and spokes of the Committee. There will be an open recruitment process which has been used in previous appointments.

3.10 Panel members will be provided with remuneration for the time commitment undertaken but also reflecting that the work is for public service and not private gain. The remuneration will be similar to that which other local district panels receive and it will be funded by the democratic services budget. The appointments will be for this year but could be extended upon review. The Director of Customer and Community Services has the authority to remove any Panel member were there to be any issues which called into question the integrity of the Panel’s conduct or work.

4. **CONSULTATIONS**

The Director of Customer and Community Services and Head of Legal Services have seen this report.

5. **OPTIONS**

The Committee has agreed that a review of allowances is appropriate. The Council is not obliged to accept a Panel's recommendations, but what it cannot do is disregard a Panel's recommendations and agree a higher level of allowances than that being recommended.

6. **IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Financial Implications**

There is an annual budget for allowances. Decisions taken on allowances may have budget implications.

(b) **Staffing Implications** (if not covered in Consultations Section)

None

(c) **Equal Opportunities Implications**

The Panel will consider the equalities issues as part of its work.

(d) **Environmental Implications**

(e) **Procurement**

(f) **Consultation and communication**

(g) **Community Safety**

None implications of the above.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: The following are the background papers that were used in the preparation of this report:

None.

The author and contact officer for queries on the report is Gary Clift 01223 457011.

Report file:

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