

Present:

Committee Members: Councillors McPherson (Chair), Benstead (Vice-Chair), Cantrill, Gawthrope, Holt, Robertson

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

Review of Members' Allowances

The committee received a report from the Independent Remuneration Panel which contained recommendations following a review of the current Members' Allowances Scheme. The committee noted the total figure in the table in paragraph 4.3 of the officer report should read £41,913

Councillor Robertson made the following points which also proposed some amendments to the Independent Panel's recommendations:

- a) In recognition of the onerous and time consuming nature of their work the extra responsibility paid to members of the Licensing Committee should not be scrapped.
- b) The council already support councillors by providing new laptops when requested. This should continue to be the case but the automatic issue of laptops or tablets is not agreed.
- c) Claimable allowance such as for travel, subsistence and carer are felt to be adequate but carers should be paid at least the Living Wage.
- d) The suggested provision of a meal at the break at main Council meetings is not supported.

He also recommended to the Panel that the Oxford City Council scheme sets a basic allowance and then adds Special Responsibility Allowances as multiples of that. The Panel is requested to consider for the second stage of their work that sort of scheme as one possibility. The Committee agreed and the Panel acknowledged this request.

The committee noted that by accepting not to scrap the Licensing Committee special responsibility allowance the savings would be reduced by £5,004 and the total would be £46,917.

Resolved to recommend to Council:

To adopt the amended interim recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel:

Basic Allowance

- i. The Area Committee Allowance be removed and the sum consolidated into the Basic Allowance.
- ii. (By 4 votes to 2) The Basic Allowance be re-aligned to the National Living Wage and thereafter be indexed in line with National Living Wage increases in order to rectify the anomalous situation which has arisen through failing to index link Councillors' Allowances. By 1st April 2016 the national minimum wage will have increased by 25.6% from £5.73 per hour in 2008, (when current Allowance payments were last set) to £7.20 per hour. The Basic Allowance should be increased by the same percentage to £4,300 with effect from the 2016/17 municipal year.
- iii. (By 4 votes to 2) This increase be applied immediately, in full, since it will only bring the Basic Allowance closer to, rather than on a par with, that paid to Members of comparable Councils.

Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

- iv. As an interim measure, pending the outcome of a more comprehensive review of SRA payments, that the Planning Committee Chair's SRA be increased by £1,000 to £3,226 pa to bring the allowance payment for this role closer to that paid by comparable authorities. That other allowances for the Planning Committee (ie for Vice-chair and Members) remain the same.
- v. As an interim measure, that SRAs be removed from Vice Chairs of all committees other than that of the Planning Committee and that the SRAs to all members of committees (with the exception of the Licensing, Planning and Joint Development Control Committees) be discontinued. This saving could be reallocated to part fund the recommended

changes to the Basic Allowance, the Planning Committee Chair's allowance or expenses.

- vi. With the exceptions outlined above, other SRAs remain as they are for the present, and a further detailed review of SRAs be conducted within 6 months when the impact of current developments in Councillor roles and responsibilities is clearer. The objective of this review will be to produce an internally consistent scheme for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances which will be appropriate to current Councillor roles and responsibilities.

IT/Expenses

- vii. As part of the move to increase efficiency and reduce waste, IT support be enhanced for councillors. (The Panel understand that there are IT support issues within the Council which should be resolved). This will produce efficiencies in the longer term. The council already support councillors by providing new laptops when requested. This should continue to be the case but the automatic issue of laptops or tablets is not agreed.
 - viii. As the stationery expense is so out of date the claim for stationery expense be removed and a gross amount of £75 per councillor per annum be allowed in addition to the Basic Allowance. This is to cover stationery, mobile phone and other communication expenses.
 - ix. Apart from the changes outlined above travel, subsistence and carers' allowances remain the same but carers should be paid at least the Living Wage.
 - x. That the next full review of the Members' Allowances Scheme should take place not more than two years from the date of the Panel's report.
- 2.2 That Council approves the budgetary requirement for 2016/17 up to £46,917 from Reserves.