

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Democratic Services Manager
TO: Civic Affairs Committee 15/9/2010
WARDS: All

MEMBERS ALLOWANCES

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to seek agreement on the timetable for the Members Allowances Scheme 2011/12.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To agree that the Independent Remuneration Panel report its findings and recommendations to Committee on 23 March 2011.
- 2.2 To make any changes to the Panel's Terms of Reference.
- 2.3 To ask officers to investigate alternatives to the annual process approach this authority has followed since 2002 in agreeing its Allowances Scheme and report to the 23 March 2011 committee.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The need for the Independent Remuneration Panel to report ahead of 2011 budget preparations is not necessary as any budget increase that would need the Executive's prior consideration is highly improbable. Indeed, it is possible that the Panel will have to consider a reduction in the total Allowances budget.
- 3.2 The IRP is keen to gather data and this will take time during the autumn. Officers are currently looking at what other authorities do (and the rates of success) before finalizing what data will be collected and how it will be collected and working with the Panel to conduct the survey. In addition, and taking on board comments from various representations made to them, the Panel will spend time attending a selection of committee meetings and will liaise more closely with officers and selected councilors to better understand the various functions that are undertaken.

4. A SCHEME FOR 2011/12

- 4.1 It proposed that the Independent Remuneration Panel meet in January/February 2011 and report its proposals to 23 March 2011 committee.

The Panel's Terms of Reference were reviewed in September 2009 and are to recommend an Allowances Scheme which:

- (i) Recognises that councillors undertake their 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, explain and administer.
- (vi) Recognises the level of out-of-pocket expenses councillors incur in carrying out their functions (e.g. stationery, telephone costs and computer consumables).
- (vii) Has flexibility to reflect changes of responsibilities of individual councillors during the course of a municipal year.

As part of above, the statutory requirement is for the Panel to recommend:

- a. The level of basic allowance.
- b. Which member roles should receive a special responsibility allowance and what level.
- c. Whether allowances are pensionable and if so applied to basic and/or special responsibility allowances.
- d. Whether a childcare and dependent carers' allowances should be made available, at what level, and how it should be determined.
- e. Duties for which travelling and subsistence is to be paid and levels of allowance.
- f. Levels of allowance which should be paid to co-opted members.
- g. Whether any allowance should be backdated to the beginning of the financial year in event of the scheme being amended.
- h. Whether annual adjustments of allowance levels may be made by reference to an index, and if so, for how long such a measure should run.

- 4.2 The Committee can amend these Terms of Reference now or await the Panel's new report in March 2011, which is due to involve new data gathering and consideration of alternatives to the current process we go through annually, also to report in March.

5. RECRUITMENT TO, AND MEMBERSHIP OF, THE PANEL

- 5.1 Since its inception in 2002, the Council has required 5 members of the public make up its IRP. Recruitment to one vacancy took place this April (having been two members down for the last two years) so there are now 4 members. We have included information on the work of the IRP on the democracy pages of the summer edition of Cambridge Matters which went to every household in June. We had one application of interest received and a selection panel is being set up.
- 5.2 There are 2 members who have been in place since 2002 and should be replaced as soon as practicable. Bearing in mind it is a voluntary role (there is a payment equating to £12 per hour for the hours worked, but this is on the minimal end compared to other authorities that pay retainers). There was no expectation at appointment of such a long period of service and any Panel member can leave at any time. There is also a risk that you become, or more often are seen to be, institutionalised with long service.
- 5.3 Officers will do further work in this area and will report in March 2011 and will make recommendations on length of service and the future size of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

6. IMPLICATIONS

(a) Financial Implications

None arising from this report.

(b) Staffing Implications

The Independent Remuneration Panel should be provided with adequate support to carry out its work effectively. Recruiting new Panel members and undertaking a more intensive data gathering project will require more officer support work than in recent years.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None.

The author and contact officer for queries on the report is Gary Clift gary.clift@cambridge.gov.uk or 01223 457011

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