

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Democratic Services Manager

TO: Civic Affairs Committee

23/3/2011

WARDS: None

MEMBER ALLOWANCES 2011 - 2012

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Under the Local Government Act 2000 and relevant Regulations, an Independent Remuneration Panel ('the Panel') is appointed to make recommendations to the Council on the amount of allowance payable to Councillors. The Council, before it makes or amends its allowance scheme, must have regard to the Panel's recommendations, but is not bound by them. The Panel's report is appended.
- 1.2 Since inception in 2002, the Panel has met at least once per year and reported to the Civic Affairs Committee annually so that councillors debate and agree an allowance scheme for the new Municipal Year, which starts on the day of the Annual Meeting of the Council, which for this year is 26 May.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is:

- 2.1 Requested to consider the Panel's recommendations for Members' Allowances for the 2011/12 year as set out in its report, make any amendments to it, and recommend a Scheme to Council for adoption on 7 April.
- 2.2 Recommended to agree a working assumption that the 2012/13 Allowance Scheme will be the same as 2011/12, with an inflationary adjustment as set in the Council Budget Setting Report February 2012. This working assumption is that officers will review with the Chair and spokes if there is any reason which requires the Panel to

convene and deliberate prior to the Committee considering the 2012/13 Scheme.

- 2.3 Recommended to agree that the Panel should consist of three members with an alternate and that each member should serve a four year term, extended by two years.

3. PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE

- 3.1 In addition to the Panel's report, officers were asked by the Committee last September to report to this meeting on any alternatives to reporting annually on Members Allowances, as is the current approach and has been in place since 2002. Officers were also asked to report on the make up of the Panel.

The annual convening of the Panel

- 3.2 The intention of the 2000 Act and the related statutory guidance was to maintain the ability of councillors to determine their own allowances but to introduce a prior input of views of a panel of lay people who either lived or worked in the authority's area. By being required to have regard to the views of lay people, who will have researched the issues, it was expected that councillors would more carefully consider the justification for any increases. In England, Councillor allowances have been set with regard to an Independent Panel's recommendations since 2002.
- 3.3 Local authorities that are elected to every 4 years convene their Panel every four years. Local authorities that elect by thirds may choose (but are not obliged) to require Panels to meet more frequently to take account of changes which would impact on an allowances scheme (eg. a change in political control). In Cambridgeshire, no other district council convenes its Panel annually and over the last eight years, the majority of councils have concluded that it is not necessary for its Panel to meet annually.
- 3.4 The Panel's recommendations are that the main components of the scheme remains the same and this will be the fifth consecutive year that the basic allowance and rates of special responsibility allowances will have been retained. Taking this into account, the Committee is recommended that there should at this stage be a working assumption that the Panel need not be convened in 2011/12 and that an inflation-only increase with no other change is planned for the 2012/13 allowances scheme. Officers will review the position with the Chair and spokes during the year to ensure that if there is

any reason which requires the Panel to convene prior to the Committee considering the 2012/13 Allowances Scheme; then it will.

The composition of the Panel

- 3.5 The membership of the Panel has been set at five by the Committee since inception in 2001, the law requires a minimum of three. In recent years, and despite various recruitment techniques, officers have struggled to attract applicants to maintain a Panel of five with two members having been retained on the Panel for over 8 years to ensure continuity and compliance with the legal requirement. With the resignation of the original member of the Panel just received, and the Panel now back to 3 members, it is recommended that the Panel in future consist of 3 with an alternate and that officers recruit to that vacancy immediately. Officers will consult members on ideas for reaching the largest audience to generate applications of interest. It is also recommended that a panel member's term is defined, which has not been set out before, and that this should be four years with the possibility of extending it for a further two years.

4. IMPLICATIONS

(a) Financial Implications

If the Allowance Scheme is agreed as recommended, the forecast spend for 2011/12 will be £241,985 which will be a slight reduction on 2010/11 (£242,423). If the Allowance Scheme is agreed as recommended, the basic allowance paid to all 42 councillors and the rate of special responsibility allowances paid will have remained at the same level since May 2007.

(b) Staffing Implications

If Committee agrees the recommendations, less resources will be required in 2011/12 as the Panel's work will be much reduced. There will be some additional work required to recruit to the alternate vacancy on the Panel.

(c) Equal Opportunities Implications

None arising from this report.

(d) Environmental Implications

None arising from this report.

(e) Community Safety

None arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: The following are the background papers that were used in the preparation of this report – see the Panel's report appended

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