

Report to Council

14 October 2020

By the Chief Executive



DECISION REQUIRED

Not Exempt

Independent Remuneration Panel

Executive Summary

The Council is required to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel, comprising at least three people, every four years in order to consider Members' allowances. The previous Panel's report dated August 2015 and a subsequent interim report dated January 2018 had been agreed and implemented.

The current Members' allowances need to be reviewed because it is more than four years since the last full review. Therefore officers have gone through the process of recruiting new Panel members. Three suitable candidates have come forward. They have already been interviewed by the Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Council, who agree with the following recommendations.

Recommendations

The Council is recommended:

- (i) to delegate to the Chief Executive the approval of the appointment of up to three independent members to sit on the Independent Remuneration Panel;
- (ii) to agree that the appointed Panel Members be paid £700 each upon conclusion of the review and that any travelling and subsistence expenses should be paid at the current approved rate for Members.

Reasons for Recommendations

To comply with statutory requirements, in particular (i) the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and (ii) the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003

Background Papers

Report to Council: 25 June 2014; 9 September 2015; 25 April 2018

Wards affected: All

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Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Council is required to provide for Members' allowances to be considered by an Independent Remuneration Panel at least every four years.
- 1.2 Councils are obliged to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel to consider the level of allowances that are appropriate for the various responsibilities that Members undertake, including a basic allowance for all Members.
- 1.3 Recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel do not have to be accepted by the Council, but the Council has a duty to have regard to their recommendations and it is advisable that any revisions are based on those recommendations.
- 1.4 The last full review of Members' allowances was in 2015 and allowances were set for all levels of responsibility. In 2018 an interim review was undertaken to determine whether the allowances remained appropriate. This report recommended a number of minor amendments, and that the basic allowance and special responsibility allowances continue to be increased in line with annual percentage increases in Officers' pay.

2 Relevant Statutory policy

- 2.1 The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) Regulations 2003 require the Council to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel at least every four years to review Members' allowances.

3 Details

- 3.1 With the requirement to appoint a new Panel, the Council first approached existing Panel members. Of these, Martin Loates, has agreed to continue in this role. The other two were recruited through advertising on the Council's website and by contacting interested stakeholders who were invited to put forward candidates.
- 3.2 After a protracted period, two more suitable candidates, Paul Allen and Alan Ladley, came forward. They have suitable experience and satisfy the requirements for this post. They have met with the approval of the Leader and Deputy Leader.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 Given that the last full review by an Independent Remuneration Panel was over four years ago, it is important to appoint the new Panel as swiftly as possible. As we only have three candidates and as they have already met with the approval of the Leader and Deputy Leader, it is suggested that Council should delegate to the Chief Executive the appointment of up to three independent members to sit on the Panel.
- 4.2 Once the Independent Remuneration Panel has been appointed, its members will need to proceed to an immediate review of this Council's Members' allowances.

The review will ensure all Councillors have an opportunity to express their views and include interviews with a cross-section of Councillors and officers. Comparisons with allowances paid by other authorities and public bodies will also be taken into account.

5 Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 The Monitoring Officer and Director of Corporate Resources have been consulted.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 The Council is required by statute to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel and, as such, there are no alternative courses of action that can be taken.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 There are no direct financial consequences relating to the setting-up of the Panel but the Council has, in the past, paid a fee to each member of the Panel in recognition of their work.

At the time of the last full review in 2015 this amounted to £700 for each Panel member. It is suggested that the Panel members appointed this time should be paid the same amount each upon conclusion of the review and that any travelling and subsistence expenses should be paid at the current approved rate for Members. A one-off payment of £700 is more than the average amount paid by local authorities so it is considered reasonable to keep the fee unchanged.

- 7.2 There may also, in due course, be financial consequences arising from the recommendations of the Panel.

8 Legal Considerations and Implications

- 8.1 The appointment of an Independent Remuneration Panel is required to comply with statutory requirements, in particular (i) the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and (ii) the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 If the Council does not appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel, its scheme of Members' Allowances will be ultra vires.

10. Equalities and Human Rights implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

- 11.1 The review of allowances will help ensure that a fair scheme of remuneration is in place for all Members to reflect their respective responsibilities.

12 Environmental Implications

12.1 The proposal will have no impact in this respect.

13 Other Considerations

13.1 The proposal will have no impact in respect of Crime and Disorder. Consideration will be given to the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations.