

Minutes

Independent Remuneration Panel

Venue:	Committee Room
Date:	Thursday 11 August 2016
Time:	6:00pm
Present:	Allan Stewart (Chair), William Inness and Wanda Stables
Also Present:	Councillor Mark Crane
Officers present:	Alex Dochery, Graduate Trainee; Palbinder Mann, Democratic Services Manager and Gillian Marshall, Solicitor to the Council

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Since this was the first meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel, the Democratic Services Officer sought nominations of a Chair for the Panel.

RESOLVED:

That Allan Stewart be elected as Chair of the Panel.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no absences

3. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the terms of reference for the Independent Remuneration Panel. The Solicitor to the Council explained that the recommendations made by the Panel on the payment of an IT allowance

should be flexible in the event of future changes such as the introduction of electronic working for Members, and that the Panel could also recommend whether the Members' Allowances scheme they recommend to Council should be indexed for a set period of time.

5. SELBY DISTRICT COUNCIL'S MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME – REPORT TO THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The Independent Remuneration Panel looked at a report provided to them on the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme.

In reference to Members' current level of basic allowance, the Panel members discussed the current workload of Members, and how this had changed since the reduction in the number of Councillors from 41 to 31 following the completion of the review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in 2015. While Panel members acknowledged the difficulty in obtaining an average figure for the number of hours Members felt necessary to be able to undertake District Councillor duties, the general consensus was that Councillor workload has increased since the aforementioned reduction in Councillors.

The Panel noted that Members' level of basic allowance has not increased since 2011, despite the recommendation that the Council's Members' Allowances scheme should be indexed to match local government pay settlements. The Panel recommended that the level of basic allowance was raised to account for this difference.

The meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel was the first since the Council moved to a Leader and Cabinet executive structure in 2011, and Panel members discussed the role of the Executive and questioned how this role has developed since the Council first moved to this model. The consensus was that Executive Members had a high workload, and their special responsibility allowance (SRA) should be slightly increased to reflect this. The Panel members wished to know more about the portfolios held by each Executive Member and requested that the portfolios for each Executive member be brought to the next meeting.

The role of the Deputy Leader was also discussed including the responsibilities in addition to those of being a member on the Executive. The Panel discussed the role with Councillor Crane. After hearing the additional responsibilities expected of the role, the Panel considered slightly raising the SRA for Deputy Leader to reflect the workload.

The Panel then discussed the SRAs for the Chairs of Council Committees. With regard to the Chair of the Planning Committee, the Panel discussed the role and workload with Councillor Crane who felt that in terms of workload, the Planning Committee was the only committee that was comparable to the Executive. The officers present informed the Panel that in addition to the

monthly Planning Committee meetings, a significant number of Planning sub-committee and special meetings took place which the Chairman also attends. The Panel members agreed that the Chair of Planning had a high workload and considered whether the SRA should in fact be raised slightly to account for this.

The Panel members questioned whether the workload for the Chair of Licensing Committee was comparable to that of the Chair of Planning Committee since the two chairmen currently received the same level of SRA. Both Councillor Crane and the officers present agreed that the workloads of both Committees were not comparable with the Planning Committee having a much higher workload. In light of this, the Panel discussed whether the SRA given to the Chair of the Licensing Committee should be decreased to a similar level to that received by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Panel then discussed the Chairman roles on the Scrutiny Committee, Policy Review Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee. The Solicitor to the Council explained that there was currently a review of the scrutiny function at the Council which was on-going. The Panel noted that the Audit and Governance Committee meet less frequently than the other two Scrutiny committees, although the Solicitor to the Council noted that since the last review of Members' allowances, the Audit Committee has taken on a bigger role to include Audit and Governance. The Panel felt that although more information on the Council's three Scrutiny Committees would be helpful, the SRAs given to the Chairs of the three Committees seemed appropriate.

On the subject of the SRA given to the majority group leader, the Panel felt that this was unnecessary as the majority group leader was also the Leader of the Council and under the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme councillors could not receive more than one SRA. Consequently, the Panel members stated that this could be removed in the new scheme.

The Panel then discussed the Leader's SRA. The Panel felt that the Leader's SRA had to be such as to enable those that had a job the opportunity to also take up the role. When questioned on his time commitments as the Leader of the Council, Councillor Crane explained that he spent one day a week at the Civic Centre, plus other time, and that he also has a full-time job.

The Panel discussed the dependents' / child carers' allowance. The Solicitor to the Council advised that if the Panel members decided to set an allowance for this, clear eligibility criteria would need to be established. It was felt that up to now there was no evidence that the lack of such an allowance prevented people from becoming District Councillors.

The subject of a co-optees' allowance was also discussed by the Panel. The Solicitor to the Council noted that co-optees were only added to a Committee if they could add specific knowledge to that Committee. It was explained that currently, the Community Engagement Forums (CEFs) were the only Council

meeting that had co-opted members, however meetings took place in local areas and travel costs were not paid to them. The Panel felt that a co-optees' allowance was not necessary for Council.

The Panel discussed the SRA given to the Leader of the Opposition. In response to questions asked by the Panel regarding the Leader of the Opposition's responsibilities, Councillor Crane noted that this included the voluntary attendance of the Executive and cross-party working meetings. The Solicitor to the Council also noted that the SRA was not related to the size of the opposition, but rather about enabling the individual to fulfil the role.

Discussion took place on ICT allowances. The Democratic Services Manager gave Panel members a brief overview of the Council's current ICT allowances scheme, and also informed them of the possible introduction of tablets for Members in the future in an effort to go paperless. Officers recommended that the Panel provide clear rules on ICT allowances. The Democratic Services Manager noted that guidance should include rules for households with two councillors. The Panel members stated that even when the Councillors switched to tablets, there would still be a need to print off documents and therefore extra costs would be incurred. Councillor Crane noted that other local authorities had given their Members tablets and that further research could be done on their ICT allowances scheme. The Panel asked for further benchmarking to be done on Members' ICT allowances.

The Panel then discussed the Chairman's allowance, which was not currently part of the Council's Members' Allowances scheme. When questioned on what this allowance was used for, the Officers present noted that the Chairman's allowance was reserved for civic functions and to support fundraising activities, as well as paying costs incurred by the Chairman in their civic year. The Panel members felt that the Chairman's allowance should recognise the time commitment given to role. The Panel felt that the budget could be split in two parts with one part an allowance and the other a budget to support the Chairman in their civic year. In order to establish clear guidelines on what the budget could be spent on, Panel members asked officers for further information on what past Chairmen had used their allowance for, and how much was left over following their year in post.

Councillor Crane left the meeting at this point and did not return.

The last item of discussion was Members' travel allowances. The Officers present recommended that Panel members set clear and transparent guidance on travel expenses. Further information was requested by the Panel on the Council's own staff travel allowances scheme in order to ensure fairness between the two schemes.

6. NEXT STEPS

The Independent Remuneration Panel thanked the Officers present for the report and their assistance.

The Panel members asked Officers for further work to be done ahead of their next meeting. This included financial modelling of the Council's Members Allowances Schemes to reflect the Panel's comments, benchmarking of ICT allowances and further information on the current review of Scrutiny Committee, the Chairman's allowance and staff travel allowances.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was declared.

The meeting closed at 19.59.