

Minutes

Independent Remuneration Panel

Venue:	Meeting Room 5
Date:	Friday 07 October 2016
Time:	1:00pm
Present:	Allan Stewart (Chair), William Inness and Wanda Stables.
Officers present:	Alex Dochery, Graduate Trainee; Palbinder Mann, Democratic Services Manager and Gillian Marshall, Solicitor to the Council.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no absences.

2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Independent Remuneration Panel considered the minutes from the meeting held on 11 August 2016.

RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes from the meeting held on 11 August 2016 for signature by the Chair.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Democratic Services Manager reminded Panel Members of the agreed terms of reference for the Independent Remuneration Panel.

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

The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) considered the report on the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme. The following discussion took place on the different areas of the scheme:

A Revised Level of Basic Allowance and Adjusting Certain Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

It was noted that members had requested financial modelling of the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme to be undertaken to reflect different potential outcomes following the Panel's comments at the previous meeting. The Officers present presented the Panel with this financial modelling, highlighting the various adjustments made.

The financial modelling presented to the Panel contained the following information:

- The total cost of the Council's 2011 Members' Allowances Scheme was £216,057.46 and accounted for 41 District Councillors;
- The total cost of the Council's current Members' Allowances Scheme was £174,903.66 following the reduction in the number of Councillors to 31 in 2015. It was noted that this was a reduction of £41,15.38 on the 2011 total figure;
- A 4.2% increase to Councillors' level of basic allowance would increase the basic allowance from £4,115.38 to £4,288.23. It was noted that this increase reflected the four pay awards that have been awarded to Council staff since 2011;
- A recalculation of all Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) was conducted to reflect the 4.2% increase to the level of basic allowance. This was done by applying their respective existing multiplier to the revised level of basic allowance;
- Adjustments were made to the SRAs given to the Deputy Leader and Members of the Executive as per the discussions at the previous meeting;
- Adjustments were made to the SRA given to the Chair of Licensing and the removal of the SRA for the Majority Group Leader from the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme as discussed at the previous meeting.

Upon consideration of the financial modelling presented to the IRP concerning adjustments to the SRAs given to the Deputy Leader and Members of the Executive, Panel members preferred the following options:

- Increasing the weighting for the Deputy Leader from 1 to 1.3 which would result in an increase of their SRA from £4,288.23 to £5,574.70, and;
- Increasing the weighting for Executive Members from 1 to 1.2 which would result in an increase of their SRA from £4,288.23 to £5,145.88

The Panel felt that the financial modelling presented by the Officers present was a fair reflection of their previous comments.

The Solicitor to the Council also reminded the Panel that they could choose to recommend whether the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme was indexed to match local government pay settlements, and if so recommend which multiplier is used (e.g. the NJC annual cost of living pay award, Consumer Price Index (CPI) or the Retail Price Index (RPI)).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- i) That Members receive a 4.2% increase to their level of basic allowance to reflect the four pay awards that have been given to Council staff since 2011, and that all SRAs are recalculated using the revised level of basic allowance (£4,228.23);
- ii) That the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme is indexed for the next four years to match local government pay settlements using the NJC annual cost of living pay award (including any pay award agreed for Council staff for the next financial year);
- iii) That the weighting given to the Deputy Leader is increased from 1 to 1.3, raising their SRA from £4,288.23 to £5,574.70;
- iv) That the weighting given to Executive Members is increased from 1 to 1.2, raising their SRA from £4,288.23 to £5,145.88;
- v) That the weighting given to the Chair of Licensing is decreased from 1 to 0.75, thus decreasing his SRA from £4,288.23 to £3,216.17;
- vi) That the SRA given to the Majority Group Leader is removed from the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme.

Scrutiny Committee

The Solicitor to the Council provided the Panel with an update on the ongoing review of the Council's scrutiny function. The Solicitor to the Council noted that while the Council would retain Audit and Governance Committee as it currently functioned, there were two options to be considered for Policy Review Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These were as follows:

- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Policy Review Committee were merged into one committee;
- That the Committees remained as two distinct committees but with revised terms of reference.

The Solicitor to the Council explained that recommendations on the SRA given to the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee should be flexible in the event of future changes, such as a (potential) merger of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Policy Review Committee. Panel members noted that if this occurred, the Chair would have a bigger workload and therefore their SRA would need to be increased to reflect this. However, Panel members felt that the SRA given to the Chair of a prospective single Scrutiny Committee should not reach or exceed the level of that received by the Chair of Planning Committee given the contrasting workloads.

RECOMMENDATION:

- i) That if the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Policy Review Committee are combined into one committee, the weighting given to the committee chairman is set at 0.9, giving the chair a SRA of £3,859.41.

Dependents' / Child Carers' Allowance

The Panel discussed a dependents' / child carers' allowance. Panel members felt that it was important that Councillors were not discouraged from carrying out council work and standing for election due to their personal responsibilities. In addition, Panel members felt that the inclusion of a dependents' / child carers' allowance in the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme would enable more people to become Councillors.

The Panel discussed the conditions of such an allowance and the rates of payment for the costs incurred. Panel members felt that official duties should constitute the following:

- Attendance at a meeting of the Council or of any Committee, or Sub-Committee of Working Party of the Council, or of any body to which the Council makes appointments or nominations, or of any Committee or Sub-Committee of such a body;
- Attendance at a meeting of the Executive or a meeting of any of its Committees;
- Attendance at a meeting of any association of Authorities of which the Council is a member such as joint committees or combined authorities.

Panel members also felt that the Council should reimburse its Members' costs at a rate of the National Living Wage (currently £7.20 an hour) and that reimbursement should also cover reasonable travel time. It was stated that all claims must be supported by receipts and/or evidence.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- i)** That the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme includes a dependents' / carers' allowance;
- ii)** That eligible Councillors are reimbursed of the expenditure incurred with regard to the care of their children or dependents when undertaking the following official duties:
 - attending a meeting of the Council or any Committee, or Sub-Committee of Working Party of the Council, or of any body to which the Council makes appointments or nominations, or of any Committee or Sub-Committee of such a body;
 - attending a meeting of the Executive or a meeting of any of its Committees;
 - attending a meeting of any association of Authorities of which the Council is a member.
- iii)** That eligible Councillors' costs are reimbursed at the rate of the National Living Wage and that this reimbursement covers reasonable travel time;
- iv)** That all claims must be supported by receipts and/or evidence.

Members' ICT

Discussion took place on Members' ICT allowances. The Panel felt that following benchmarking with other authorities, it was not necessary for the Council to have differing ICT allowances for Members. Instead, the Panel felt that the Council should introduce a monthly ICT allowance that reflected the price for home broadband and consumables and agreed that £10 was a reasonable figure.

The Panel felt that the Council should not restrict County Councillors and spouses who are also District Councillors from claiming this revised ICT allowance. The Panel also recommended that Council implemented an acceptable usage policy for Members' ICT in line with that of the Council's ICT Acceptable Use Policy for staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- i)** That the Council discontinues its current ICT allowances scheme and introduces a £10 monthly ICT allowance for home broadband and consumables;
- ii)** That the Council implements an acceptable usage policy for Members' ICT, and that this policy is in line with the Council's ICT Acceptable Use Policy for staff;

- iii) That the Council's revised Members' ICT allowances scheme makes no differentials for County Council Councillors or spouses who are also District Councillors.

Travel and Subsistence Allowance

The Panel felt that Members' travel and subsistence allowances should remain in line with those given to Council staff. The Panel recommended that all claims must be supported by receipts and that Councillors should be encouraged to submit their claims within three months of their meeting/engagement for which they were claiming taking place.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- i) That Members' Travel and Subsistence allowances are in line with those given to Council staff;
- ii) That Members' travel and subsistence allowances are supported by receipts and Members submit their claims within three months of the meeting/engagement for which they are claiming taking place.

The Chairman's Allowance

At the previous meeting of the IRP, the Panel had discussed splitting the Chairman's budget in two parts with one part an allowance and the other a budget to support the Chairman in their Civic year. The Panel has also suggested the Vice Chairman's allowance should be reduced to half of the Chairman's new allowance. The Officers presented the Panel with financial modelling for how this could be implemented.

The financial modelling presented to the Panel contained the following information:

- The Chairman's allowance of £5910 split into an allowance of £1,000 and a budget of £4,910;
- A reduction to the Vice Chairman's allowance, from £960 to £500.

The Panel discussed the financial modelling presented by the Officers. Panel members felt that the split of the Chairman's budget into an allowance and budget was a sensible solution. It was noted that the Chairman's allowance would be included as part of the Members' Allowances Scheme as this was not currently the case. The Panel recommended that any funding remaining in the Chairman's budget at the end of their year in office should be paid into the Chairman's chosen charity.

The Panel felt that since the Chairman of the Council was, under their proposed recommendations, receiving an allowance of £1,000, the Vice Chairman's allowance should be reduced appropriately.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- i) That the Chairman's allowance (£5,910) is split into an allowance of £1,000 and a budget of £4,910;
- ii) That any leftover money in the Chairman's budget at the end of their civic year be given to the Chairman's chosen charity;
- iii) That the Vice Chairman's allowance is reduced from £960 to £500.

6. NEXT STEPS

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

The Panel agreed for the Chair of the Panel to have delegated authority to approve the recommendations and the final report made to Council on the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme. The Officers present agreed to send the final report to the Panel for comment. The Officers informed the Panel of their intention to present the IRP's recommendations to Council on 13th December, 2016.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business

The meeting closed at 2:16pm.