

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Full Council – 9 December 2014

Joint Independent Remuneration Panel – Process to Review Members' Allowances

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Vivienne Stock-Williams)

1. Executive Summary

The report seeks:-

- (a) To advise the Council of the latest position with regard to the membership of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel; and
- (b) Members' endorsement for the timetable and process to review the Council's Member Allowances Scheme in light of the May 2015 Local Government Elections.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following further deliberations, the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel now comprises Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, West Somerset Council and Mendip District Council.
- 2.2 Full membership of the proposed panel is set out in Appendix A to this report. Full Council is requested to note and endorse the composition of the Panel.
- 2.3 Given the impending May 2015 elections, it is important that there is clarity in terms of a process and timetable for reviewing the Members' Allowance Scheme.
- 2.4 The Joint Independent Remuneration Panel met on 27 November 2014 and have recommended to the constituent partners that the process for the formal review of the Members' Allowances Scheme should be as follows:-
 - (a) To continue to apply the existing scheme for the first part of the 2015/2016 financial year, pending the adoption of a revised scheme of Members' Allowances following the Borough Council Elections in May 2015.

- (b) To recommend to the Council to be elected in May 2015 that the budget for Members' Allowances for 2015/2016 to fund the new scheme following the election is contained within the total budget for Members' Allowances for 2014/2015.
- (c) To agree to carry out a survey of Members' views on the Council scheme in advance of the 2015 Borough Council Elections to inform decisions in relation to new scheme.
- (d) To agree the following timetable for the review and implementation of a new scheme of Members' allowances:-
- (i) Pre-Borough Elections
- To carry out a survey of Members to ascertain views on the scheme, suggestions for improvements, numbers of hours worked per week on Council business (to inform future Panel recommendations in relation to the allowances scheme).
 - To review the base calculation for the Basic Allowance and agree in principle (subject to affirmation by the new Council) the new basis for the basic allowance calculation.
 - To agree in principle the future indexing of the Basic Allowance both in terms of the methodology and the length of time it will be applied pending review.
 - To review the overall make-up of the scheme and make any further recommendations to Full Council for consideration and in principle approval prior to the elections.
- (ii) Post Borough Elections
- Meeting of the Panel to be held in June 2015 once the annual meeting of the Council has agreed the Committee structure and the Leader has agreed the Executive arrangements of the Council.
 - Panel to bring recommendations to the July 2015 Council meeting for a new scheme to ask Council to endorse the in principle recommendations from the earlier Council meeting in respect of Basic Allowance and agree Special Responsibility Allowances, the list of approved duties, travel allowance provisions, Carers Allowance etc.
 - Full Council in July to agree new Scheme of Members' Allowances having considered the recommendations of the Panel and to backdate payments as necessary.

2.5 The Council is requested to endorse the process and timetable as put forward by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

3. Finance Comments

- 3.1 In an effort to ensure that any proposals that come forward will be affordable it is suggested that a clear steer is provided to maintain the Members' Allowance Budget for 2015/2016 to similar levels as the budget included for this purpose in the financial year 2014/2015.

4. Legal Comments

None in respect of this report.

5. Links to Corporate Aims

Not applicable.

6. Environmental and Community Safety Implications

Not applicable.

7. Equalities Impact

None in respect of this report.

8. Consultation Implications

- 8.1 None in respect of this report; Members will be fully involved in any review of the Members' Allowance Scheme by providing information via a survey and having the final say in terms of the Council making a decision in respect of any recommendations emanating from the panel.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Council notes the formal expansion of the Panel to include Taunton Deane Borough Council.
- 9.2 The Council endorses the Panel membership including the proposed representatives for Mendip District Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council.
- 9.3 That the Council endorses the timetable and process from the formal review of the Taunton Deane Borough Council Members' Allowance Scheme as set out in Section 5.

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Appendix A

Membership of the Joint Independent Members' Remuneration Panel

- Graham Russell (representing Mendip District Council);
- Rob Culligan (representing Somerset County Council **but** membership ends January 2015);
- Eelke Zoestbergen (representing Somerset County Council **but** membership ends January 2015);
- Ian Partington (representing Somerset County Council);
- Paul Fellingham (representing Somerset County Council);
- Keith Bevan (representing Taunton Deane Borough Council). His substitute is Tony Brown;
- Robert Govier (representing West Somerset Council); and
- One vacancy – to be filled by a Somerset County Council representative.