

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Council 29 January 2009
AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / Democratic Services Manager

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES FOR 2009/10

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Members' remuneration in respect of Members' allowances levels for the period from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.
2. This is not a key decision, however, Council is required under Article 2.05 to adopt a Members' allowances scheme and review it annually. The item was first published in the October 2008 Forward Plan.

Background

3. The Independent Remuneration Panel, comprising Valerie Bright, Graham Jagger and Ruth Rogers, has undertaken an annual review of Members' Allowances levels. The panel met on 24 October 2008.

Considerations

4. The Panel's report is attached at **Appendix A**. The Panel's recommendations are reproduced in paragraph 13 below.

Options

5. Council, before it makes any amendment to the allowances scheme, must have regard to the recommendations made to it by the independent remuneration panel. It is not, however, bound to accept those recommendations.
6. The options are to:
 - (a) Accept in full the Panel's recommendations.
 - (b) Reject the recommendations and retain the existing level of allowances.
 - (c) Make variations to specific elements of the recommendations.

Implications

7.

Financial	Agreeing the panel's recommendations in full will require an increase of £19,000 on the current budget; this amount has been included in the draft revenue estimates for 2009-2010 which will be subject to approval by Cabinet and Council in February 2009.
Legal	The Council, in setting its Members' Allowances levels, is obliged to have regard to the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel established for this purpose.
Staffing	None
Risk Management	None

Equal Opportunities	Members' Allowances levels should reflect the public service element associated with the role of District Councillor, but should not discourage nominations from standing as Councillors because of unmitigated financial loss and reduced career advancement opportunities.
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Consultations

8. The Leader of the Council, together with the Group Leaders of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats plus the Group Convenor of the Independents individually addressed the Panel at its meeting on 24 October 2008.
9. As required by regulation, a notice of receipt of the report from the Panel will be published in the press.

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

10. The Council should seek to have in place an allowances scheme which both reflects the voluntary public service element of the councillor's role and prevents low allowance levels from acting as a disincentive to potential new councillors through loss of earning and career development opportunities. In achieving this balance, the Council will encourage the continuing recruitment and retention of councillors of sufficient calibre to ensure all its strategic aims are achieved.

Conclusions/Summary

11. Council is the only body that can decide on the Members' Allowances Scheme. The recommendations of the Panel are set out in the appendix, however they may be varied if Members so wish.
12. Members are reminded that,
 - (a) under the present Allowances Scheme, they may, by notice in writing given to the Chief Executive, elect to forgo any part of his / her entitlement to an allowance under this scheme, and
 - (b) a councillor not wishing to receive his / her allowance(s) may nominate a charity to which they may be paid.

Recommendations

13. Council is recommended to accept the recommendations for the Members' Allowances Scheme, contained in the Independent Remuneration Panel report attached as Appendix A to this report and set out below, effective from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 (unless specified otherwise), that
 - (a) In recognition of the work undertaken by Members, in particular those balancing work and council commitments, and in order to encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds and skills to serve as local councillors in the future and not suffer an unreasonable financial disadvantage, the basic allowance be increased by 3%.
 - (b) The Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Leader, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Members, Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen of Council, Scrutiny & Overview

and Planning Committees; Chairmen of Corporate Governance and Employment Committees be increased by 3%.

- (c) In recognition of its standing, an SRA be awarded to the Convenor of the Minor Opposition Group; the amount to be 50% of the SRA payable to the Leader of the Major Opposition Group.
- (d) Having taken into account the reduction in the number of meetings held in the municipal year, the SRA for the Chairman of the Licensing Committee be gradually phased out; therefore, for 2009/10, the allowance to be reduced by 50% of the 2008/09 allowance.
- (e) No payments be made to Chairs of the Licensing (2003) Act panels.
- (f) In noting that the workload had substantially increased since April 2008, the SRA paid to the Chairman of the Standards Committee be increased to £1,000 pa, the Independent members allowance be increased to £600 pa and Parish members allowance be increased to £400 pa. The foregoing amounts to be backdated to 1 April 2008.
- (g) In recognition of the impact of the project on the district and, due to the position having comparable duties to those of the Planning Committee Chairman, an SRA of £4570 be payable to the Chair of the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee. A backdated payment of £4437 from 1 April 2008 should also be paid. This particular SRA to apply only when the Chairman of the Committee is a South Cambridgeshire District councillor.
- (h) The Dependants' Carer's allowance to be increased by 3%.
- (i) No changes to be made to the Travel, Subsistence or Overnight Subsistence allowances.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Notes from the meeting of the Members' Remuneration Panel held on 24 October 2008.

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