

REPORT TO: Council
LEAD OFFICER: Legal, Democratic and Elections Manager

23 January 2014

Members' Allowances 2014/15

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in respect of Members' allowances levels for the period from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.
2. This is not a key decision, however, Council is required under Article 2.05 to adopt a Members' allowances scheme and has previously agreed to review the Scheme on an annual basis. The item was first published in the Council's Forward Plan on 16 October 2013.

Recommendations

3. Council is requested to
 - (i) **endorse** the Independent Remuneration Panel's report attached as **Appendix 1** to this report, and
 - (ii) **agree** the following recommendations:
 - (a) that during 2014, the IRP reviews the basis and process for determining and allocating SRA payments against the need to demonstrate transparency, consistency, objectivity and fairness and with reference to benchmarked best practice in other comparable authorities for consideration by Council in 2015;
 - (b) that Members' Allowances be increased by the equivalent percentage amount as the Council agrees to apply to the pay rates of council staff; effective from the same date as staff, and
 - (c) that Councillor induction material is updated so as to ensure that all Councillors are both aware of the expenses addressed through the payment of the Basic Allowance and also of the other expenses to which they are entitled to make claims for reimbursement.

Reason for Recommendations

4. Council is required under Article 2.05 to adopt a Members' Allowances Scheme and review it annually.

Background

5. The Independent Remuneration Panel, comprising Simon Harris, Graham Jagger and Kevin McIntyre, has undertaken an annual review of Members' Allowances levels. The panel has met several times during 2013 to consider relevant information and make recommendations.

Considerations

6. The Panel's report is attached at Appendix 1.

Options

7. Council must have regard to the recommendations made to it by the Independent Remuneration Panel. However, it is not bound to accept those recommendations.

The options are to:

- (a) Accept in full the Panel's recommendations;
- (b) Reject the Panel's recommendations; or
- (c) Make variations to specific elements of the recommendations.

Implications

8. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Legal

9. 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.

Equality and Diversity

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

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

11. All members of the Council were invited to make representations to the Panel, responses are highlighted in the Panel's report.
12. As required by regulation, a notice of receipt of the report from the Panel will be published in the press.

Effect on Strategic Aims

13. The Council should seek to have in place an allowances scheme which both reflects the voluntary public service element of the councillors' 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.

Background Papers: None

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