

Meeting: COUNCIL

Agenda Item:

12

Portfolio Area: Members' Services

Date: 9 OCTOBER 2013

**MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES – REPORT OF INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION
PANEL**

Authors – Jackie Cansick Ext. 2216

Lead Officers – Scott Crudgington Ext. 2185

Contact Officer – Jackie Cansick Ext. 2216

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the report of the Independent Panel on Members' Allowances and in the light of the report amend the current scheme of allowances for 2013/2014.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the recommendations of the Independent Panel be agreed and the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2013/2014 be amended accordingly (see Appendix A) with effect from 10 October 2013 incorporating the 1% increase in line with staff covered by the terms and conditions of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) as previously recommended by the Panel.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 before an authority makes or amends a scheme that authority shall have regard to the recommendations made to it by an independent remuneration panel.
- 3.2 The Council's Independent Remuneration Panel currently comprises –
- Stephen Hollingsworth MA FRSA, Management Consultant and Chair of the Corporation of North Hertfordshire College (Panel Chair)
 - Nicholas Moss JP, Chair, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Thames Valley Courts Board and independent chair, North Hertfordshire District Council Standards Committee

- Bill Welch ACIS, Former Assistant Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Council

3.3 The last full review of the Stevenage Members' Allowances Scheme by an Independent Panel was reported to Council in February 2012. This report included a recommendation that the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) paid to Chairs of the then Development & Scrutiny Committees be subject to further review.

3.3 In addition to following up this recommendation for a further review the Panel were made aware of the change in the member level scrutiny structure introduced in May 2013 and accordingly the Panel met again in July-August 2013 to consider the SRAs for the new Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Chairs of the three Select Committees.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 The report of the Panel is attached at Appendix A and the revised Scheme, based on the recommendations in the report is attached at Appendix B.

4.2 It should be noted that the Panel had previously recommended that the Members' Allowances be increased in line with any salary increase for staff covered by the terms and conditions of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC). The figures quoted in the Panel's report at Appendix A were before the recent 1% increase in staff salaries recently announced. The revised Scheme shown at Appendix B has had the 1% applied.

4.3 In accordance with the regulations, on receipt of the Panel's report the Council has ensured that copies are available for inspection by members of the public at Daneshill House and has placed a public notice in a local newspaper stating that such a recommendations from the Panel have been received; describing the main features of the Panel's recommendations and the recommended amounts for each allowance; stating that copies of the report are available for inspection; and specifying the address of the principal office at which copies are made available.

4.4 It is for Council to consider the recommendations of the Panel and agree a Scheme.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 The revisions to the Scheme can be contained within the 2013/14 Budget as previously agreed as they result in a saving of £207 per annum.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 The provisions of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 have directed the convening of the Independent Panel; its consideration, report and recommendations; and the process of publicising the recommendations

5.2.2 In making or revising the Scheme, the Council must have regard to the Panel's report but is not strictly obliged to follow its recommendations, although it would be advisable to have good reasons for not doing so.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003
- Report of Independent Remuneration Panel – December 2011
- Council Report – February 2012

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Report of Independent Remuneration Panel
- Appendix B – Proposed Revised Scheme for 2013/2014