

Report to Council

Subject: Member Allowance Scheme and Recruitment to Independent Remuneration Panel

Date: 12 July 2023

Author: Head of Governance and Customer Services

Purpose

To consider amendments to the member Allowance Scheme for 2023/24 and to seek approval to recruit 2 new members to the Independent Remuneration Panel to enable a review of the Member Allowance Scheme for 2024/25.

Recommendation(s)

THAT Council:

- 1) Consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel at Appendix 1;**
- 2) Authorise the Monitoring Officer to make appropriate amendments to section 29 of the Constitution to reflect any changes to the Members Allowance Scheme and publicise any amendments;**
- 3) Agree to launch a recruitment exercise to fill the current vacancy on the Independent Remuneration Panel, and recruit one additional panel member; and**
- 4) Agree to establish a cross party interview panel of 3 Members to interview suitable candidates for the Independent Remuneration Panel as detailed in the report, and make recommendation to Council as to appointment.**

1 Background

- 1.1 The Local Authorities (Member's Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003, provide the statutory framework for Member Allowance Schemes. The regulations require authorities to make a scheme before the beginning of each year for the payment to Members of basic allowances for that year. The scheme can also include details of payments of other allowances including Special Responsibility Allowances.

- 1.2 At March's Council meeting, having received the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), Council agreed to thank the IRP for their work, agreed deferral of consideration of the IRP recommendations until the next ordinary meeting of Council after the election, and agreed the existing Member's Allowance Scheme Schedule for 2022/23 to continue for 2023/24.
- 1.3 Member Allowance Schemes can be amended at any time. Prior to making any amendments to a scheme, the Council must have regard to the recommendations of the IRP in respect of any proposed amendments. The recommendations of the IRP are attached. The recommendations are that there should be no change of the scheme in 2023/24 save for an increase in line with pay award for local government chief officers (this has now been agreed at 3.5% for 2023/24). It is also recommended that there should be a review of the scheme in 2023/24 and that should the Parental Leave Policy be adopted (which it was in March 2023), this should be reflected in the body of the scheme.
- 1.4 The IRP must consist of at least 3 members. This Council's IRP consists of 3 members (reduced from 5 in 2019), however one of the panel has now retired. As such, a vacancy has arisen within the panel which needs to be filled to ensure representation in line with the regulations. As the minimum number required on the panel is 3, having an additional member, so increasing membership to 4 would ensure that the IRP could always have sufficient members in the event of one being unavailable.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that Members consider the recommendations of the IRP which were first published in March 2023. Should Members be inclined to accept those recommendations, the schedule of Members Allowance will remain as per those agreed, any increase as a result of pay award, will be added and retrospectively applied from the start of 2023/24.
- 2.2 Should the recommendation of the IRP be agreed, it is proposed that the Monitoring Officer make the necessary changes to the Scheme within the Constitution and ensure any publicity requirements in relation to the scheme changes are undertaken in line with regulations.
- 2.3 It is proposed that Members agree to a recruitment exercise to fill the vacant IRP position, as well as recruiting an additional panel member, thereby increasing the panel to 4. The process of recruitment is a matter for the Council. It is proposed that this role be advertised on the Council's website and through social media as well as other publications if possible including Contacts magazine (subject to timing of print). Suitable candidates will be shortlisted in consultation with the Mayor and successful candidates interviewed with final recommendation for appointment made to Council.
- 2.4 It is proposed that a cross party interview panel of 3 be established to interview candidates for the IRP and recommend final appointments to

Council. Business advisers or Group leaders are asked to provide details to the Monitoring Officer of which Member of their group would sit on the panel.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Members could determine not to recruit to the IRP, or recruit in a different way, however, 3 panel members are required in accordance with regulations and an additional member will ensure meetings are quorate.
- 3.2 Members could agree not to amend the Member Allowance Scheme that has been agreed for 2023/24. Amendments to the scheme have already been suggested through the IRP in terms of the scheme reflecting the Parental Leave Policy for Councillors and an annual indexation increase in line with pay award.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Should Council accept the panel's recommendations, any additional costs can be met from within existing budgets.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Local Government Act 2000 and regulations made thereunder, referenced in the body of the report, set out the legislative framework for Member Allowance Schemes. Any amendments to the scheme, must be published in accordance with the scheme by way of public notice.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 The recruitment process, if approved will be done to ensure accessibility for all potential applicants.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 There are no carbon reduction/sustainability implications arising from this report.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Report to Council and Recommendations of Independent Remuneration Panel – March 2023

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 None

10 Reasons for decision

- 10.1 To ensure the Member Allowance Scheme and Independent remuneration Panel comply with legislation and remain fit for purpose.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date:

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Drafted by the Monitoring Officer