

**COUNCIL**

Wednesday, 24 January 2018

**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (REP1696)**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. To consider a report from the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) containing recommendations for a revised Waveney Members' Allowances Scheme (MAS), back dated to 1 April 2017.
2. To consider whether the Council wishes to adopt all or part of the recommendations put forward by the IRP, with regard to a revised MAS.
3. To review the fee paid to the IRP Members to see if it is adequate and whether it reflects the level of knowledge required to undertake this role.
4. To consider whether to formally grant the IRP Members permission to undertake review of Members' Allowances Schemes for Town and Parish Councils in the District.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards in the District
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<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor M Bee Leader of the Council
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<b>Supporting Officer:</b>	Nicola Wotton Democratic Services Manager 01502 523241 <a href="mailto:nicola.wotton@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">nicola.wotton@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>
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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the Regulations) require local authorities to have an approved Members' Allowances Scheme in place for the payment of allowances to Elected Members.
- 1.2 The Regulations also require local authorities to establish an IRP and that the Council should have due regard to the recommendations made by the IRP prior to considering the adoption or changes to its Members' Allowances Scheme.
- 1.3 In September 2014, both Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC) and Waveney District Council (WDC) agreed to revoke their existing arrangements for IRPs and to establish a joint pool of IRP members for both local authorities.
- 1.4 A recruitment process was subsequently undertaken and following consultation with the Leaders of the Council for both authorities, 5 individuals were appointed to the pool of IRP members and these Members undertook a training session on the role of the IRP in December 2014.
- 1.5 An IRP is comprised of community representatives completely independent of the Council(s) and so the public can have confidence that the production of a report by them on Members' Allowances is undertaken on a completely impartial basis. Any recommendations from the IRP are referred to Full Council for consideration and so the process is also open and transparent.
- 1.6 The previous Waveney MAS expired on 31 March 2015 and a review was completed at that time. Although not all of the IRP's recommendations were approved by Full Council at that time, it was agreed that a further review would take place by the end of 2017, in order to make sure that the new MAS was still appropriate.
- 1.7 Three individuals were selected from the pool of 5 IRP members to commence a review into the WDC MAS. The membership of the IRP for the current review was Karen Forster (Chair), Sandra Cox and Ivor Holden, who were the same panel members who completed the previous review.

## **2 REVIEW OF THE WAVENEY MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME**

- 2.1 The IRP has held a series of meetings and undertaken research into Members' Allowances and has now completed a comprehensive review of the Waveney MAS.
- 2.2 The full IRP report containing recommendations for a revised Scheme for WDC is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.3 The Chairman of the IRP will be present at the Full Council meeting to present the IRP's report and the other 2 members of the Panel will also be in attendance.

## **3. REVIEW OF PAYMENTS TO THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL MEMBERS**

- 3.1 The Council agreed that when it appointed the IRP, in 2014 (REP1129), a flat fee of £200, plus travel expenses would be paid to each IRP Member on completion of a specific review of the MAS.
- 3.2 The IRP Members have carried out reviews for a number of other councils in Suffolk and beyond. They have acquired, therefore, considerable experience and knowledge in relation to Members' Allowances, as a result. They have commented that their usual fees are £100 per meeting, rather than a flat rate fee. Therefore, they have requested that the Council considers paying the IRP Members £100 per meeting. This would reflect their experience and knowledge in this particular area.

3.3 In this review, the IRP met six times. If their fees were to be increased, this would be £600 per panel Member plus travel expenses, so £1,800 in total fees, compared to £600 plus travel, as payable under the current terms. This is a significant increase, to reflect the work of the Panel, and the passage of time, since 2014.

#### **4. TO CONSIDER GRANTING PERMISSION FOR THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL TO UNDERTAKE REVIEWS OF THE MEMBERS ALLOWANCE SCHEME FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS IN THE DISTRICT**

4.1 The Regulations state that a parish remuneration panel (PRP) may be established by this Council, and the PRP shall make recommendations in respect of the authorities for which the establishing authority is the responsible authority. A PRP shall consist of those persons who are also members of the District Council's IRP. The authorities in respect of which a PRP established under the Regulations makes recommendations shall each pay to the PRP an equal share of the amount of the expenses incurred by the PRP in carrying out the PRP's functions.

4.2 Beccles Town Council (BTC) has a scheme for the payment of allowances to its Members. BTC have approached this Council and have said that they would like to have their allowances scheme reviewed. Therefore, this Council is asked to agree to its IRP sitting as a PRP. We may need to approach the other town and parish councils in the District, to see if any of them also have schemes for the payment of Members' Allowances which they might want the PRP to review. It is suggested that the PRP be paid the revised fees of £100 per meeting, plus travel expenses, and that those costs be apportioned between those town or parish councils which wish to take part in any review.

#### **5 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?**

5.1 It is important that all of the policies and procedures in place to support Councillors to undertake their role are regularly reviewed to ensure that they continue to be appropriate and meet the needs of the Council. The review of the Members' Allowance Scheme will ensure that Councillors are appropriately recompensed for the additional work that they are going to undertake for the creation of a new Council for East Suffolk, which will bring about significant efficiency savings, as set out in our East Suffolk Business Plan.

#### **6 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The establishment of IRPs and the setting of Members' Allowances are governed by the Regulations. The IRP acts in accordance with the guidance issued to support the Regulations.

6.2 Statutory legislation provides for Members to be paid a Basic Allowance (BA) and a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for undertaking additional responsibilities. The role of the IRP is to review and make recommendations in respect of these and other allowances payable to Elected Members.

6.3 The Council shall have regard to the recommendations in the IRP report prior to agreeing a revised Members' Allowances Scheme and may adopt any of the recommendations put forward in full or in part.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The joint pool of IRP members was appointed following a formal recruitment process to ensure equality, openness and transparency. Specific exclusions applied but these were clearly laid out in the application form and person specification.
- 7.2 The IRP sought feedback from WDC Elected Councillors on their roles and responsibilities through a short Member questionnaire. In addition, the IRP held interviews with selected Councillors in order to inform their review.
- 7.3 The IRP also had access to comparative information on Members' Allowances on both a Suffolk-wide and national basis.

## **8 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 None. The Council is required to establish an IRP and shall have regard to the recommendations of the IRP before making or amending its Members' Allowances Scheme.

## **9 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 9.1 To ensure that a revised Members' Allowances Scheme can be put in place back dated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, having had due regard to the recommendations put forward by the IRP.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the report from the Independent Remuneration Panel containing recommendations for a revised Scheme of Members' Allowance for Waveney District Council, back dated to 1 April 2017, be adopted.
2. That the fees paid to the Independent Remuneration Panel Members be changed from £200 per review to £100 per meeting which each Member attends, as part of any review, to adequately reflect the time spent in carrying out this role, and the level of knowledge required.
3. That the Independent Remuneration Panel sits as a Parish Remuneration Panel to undertake a review of Members' Allowance Schemes for Town and Parish Councils in the District and that the costs of this be apportioned equally amongst the number of town or parish councils taking part in the review.

### **APPENDICES**

<b>Appendix A</b>	Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel
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### **BACKGROUND PAPERS – None**