

REPORT OF CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

(Meeting held 12 January 1999)

1. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 50)

The Committee has considered recommendations from the Council Standards Sub-Committee on a number of issues relating to the Members' Allowances Scheme. Members will be aware that 1999/2000 is the third and final year of a planned programme of increases in allowances to members.

The Committee was informed that the Sub-Committee had considered at length whether to retain the existing points-based system for a further year, or whether to recommend a fundamental change to the Scheme to move away from allowances based on each member's Committee memberships and special responsibilities. A change to a flat-rate scheme would accord with the strong message from Central Government that Councils' political management structures must change to reduce the amount of time spent by Councillors in formal meetings, and to allow Councillors more time in direct contact with those they represent. With this change in emphasis on the role of the Councillor, the Committee agreed with the Sub-Committee's view that there was merit in a scheme that was not linked to Committee duties. However, on balance, both the Sub-Committee and the Committee considered that the existing points-based scheme should continue for a further year, but that the officers should report to the Sub-Committee in due course on ways of achieving a flat rate scheme whilst ensuring that individual members are not disadvantaged.

The Committee recommends the fixing of a value of each point under the Scheme at £42.20 for the year 1999/2000. This will achieve the aim set when the programme of phased increases was introduced of the value of a point equating to 50% of spinal column point 33 of the Council's salary structure, based on 250 days per annum. The increase in the point value will mean additional expenditure of approximately £7,000 or 4.6% on the estimate for Members' Allowances for 1999/2000 of £151,750. The additional expenditure arises following changes to Committee structures, the appointment of a Review Board Panel and Councillor Ambassadors, all of which have involved the allocation of extra points to members. In order to avoid a recurrence of this situation, the Committee is of the opinion that in future no changes should be made to the Scheme during the course of a year. Adjustments to an individual member's allowance will be permissible if his/her personal circumstances change, but no allowances will be made if additional Committees, Sub-Committees, or Working Parties are set up during the year.

Other changes recommended by the Committee are set out below.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) ***That the points-based Members' Allowances Scheme be continued for the year 1999/2000, and that the value to be attached to each point be fixed at £42.20 to achieve an amount equal to 50% of spinal column point 33, calculated at 250 days per annum;***

- (b) That the number of points allocated to Councillor Ambassadors be reduced from 10 to 5 and that the Scheme be amended to reflect that the Leader of an Opposition Group comprising 16 to 29 members be allocated 30 points in place of the current 10;**
- (c) That no changes to points allocations arising from the appointment of Sub-Committees, Working Parties, etc, be authorised between annual reviews of the Scheme;**
- (d) That the officers report to a future meeting of the Council Standards Sub-Committee on the implementation of a flat rate scheme with effect from 2000/01, subject to no existing member of the Council being disadvantaged.**

2. EMPLOYEE TRAINING (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 51)

The Committee has received a comprehensive report on training and development undertaken since 1 April 1998, and has considered planned training and development for the remainder of the financial year. The report covered the training undertaken within directorates and that organised as part of the corporate Training and Development Strategy.

The Committee was pleased to note the significant amount of training that has taken place, but was concerned at certain of the comments expressed by the Employee Side. While the Employee Side has applauded the progress towards better training, it has concerns about employees not receiving training identified in the Performance and Development Interviews. The Committee has been assured that the Employee Side comments were being carefully considered and that efforts were being made to identify the extent of the problem.

Support for the Council's Training and Development Strategy "Developing Together" has been reiterated.

3. NEW PARISH AND PARISH COUNCIL AT GODSHILL (MINUTE NO. 54)

This item was raised as a matter of urgency at the meeting of the Committee.

Members had previously been advised that the Secretary of State had approved the District Council's recommendation that a new parish and parish council be established at Godshill. The draft Order provides for the new parish to be created on 1 April 1999, with the first election of Parish Councillors being held in conjunction with the District Council elections on 6 May.

There are a number of administrative arrangements which have to be made to enable the new parish and parish council to come into being, including the setting of a precept for the new parish. These fall to the District Council. The Committee has authorised the Director of Finance and Administration, in consultation with the Chairman of the Central Services Committee and the local members, to take whatever steps are necessary to give effect to the decision to establish a new parish and parish council at Godshill, including the assessment of the precept for the new parish. Consultation with Godshill representatives will be undertaken.

Members of the Committee are to be kept informed of action taken under the delegation arrangements.

**Councillor Mrs L P Snashall
VICE-CHAIRMAN**

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