

## REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

(Meeting held 15 December 2000)

### 1. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME – (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 8)

The Committee has considered issues relating to the Members' Allowances Scheme arising from the report of the Independent Review Panel. Matters considered were the question of whether or not to introduce a Member Accountability Scheme, whether to pay Dependant Carers' Allowances, whether to discontinue the Conference Attendance Allowance, and the pensionability of allowances.

With regard to a scheme of Member Accountability it was noted that the Independent Review Panel had discussed this issue with Councillors and the general consensus appeared to be that there was no immediate need for any such scheme. Most Members felt that Members of the Council were conscientious in carrying out their duties, and that the disadvantages of introducing any such scheme in terms of time and cost outweighed the benefits which might accrue. It would also be difficult to measure the effectiveness of a Member and the extent of the contribution he or she was making. However, there was a view that, in the light of the generally increased allowances now paid to members, the public had a right to more information on the performance of elected members.

The Committee requested the Officers to research any schemes to measure accountability at other Councils. A report is to be made to a future Committee meeting.

The Committee supported the introduction of a Dependant Carers' Allowance from May 2001. It is recommended that the Allowance be paid to Members at a rate of £4.00 per hour up to a maximum of 8 hours per week, subject to certain conditions.

Members recommend the discontinuance of the Conference Attendance Allowance, in the light of the fact that attendance allowances are generally no longer considered appropriate.

The situation regarding the pensionability of Members' Allowances remains unclear. Further guidance from the Government is awaited and the Committee is unable to make a recommendation in this regard until further guidance is received.

The Committee noted a job description prepared by the Liberal Democrat Group, for Shadow Cabinet Members. It was emphasised that it was not intended for adoption as part of the Constitution. The document has been circulated to Members and Senior Officers for information.

#### **RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) That a dependant carers' allowance of £4 per hour be paid to members with effect from May 2001, subject to the following -**
  - (i) a maximum allowance of 8 hours per week;**
  - (ii) the allowance being paid in respect of -**
    - 1. care for dependant children under 14, living at home with the Councillor**

2. ***elderly or dependant relatives who are living at the same address as the Councillor and in need of full-time care***

(iii) ***councillors claiming the allowance declaring that the minder or carer is not an immediate member of the family and is over 16 years of age;***

(b) ***That payment of Conference Attendance Allowance be discontinued from May 2001.***

## 2. TRAVEL ALLOWANCES (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 9)

The Committee reviewed the requirements for the payment of ad-hoc travel allowances.

The Committee was of the view that the current provision that Members had to travel in excess of 30 miles before a claim could be made was unreasonable and it was felt more appropriate to reduce this threshold to 15 miles. Where a journey in excess of 15 miles was involved, the full mileage should be paid.

### **RECOMMENDED:**

***That, from May 2001, Members' travel in respect of attendance at courses, conferences, seminars etc., be paid where a round trip of 15 miles or more is involved.***

## 3. ROLE OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO. 10)

The Committee considered a report on the future role of the Standards Committee. Regulations and Government guidance were expected.

The most significant change for the Committee was that the Committee would in future perform the same functions for Parish Councils as it did for the District Council. There would be a need for at least one Parish Council representative to serve on the Committee (or Sub-Committee if it was decided to deal with Parish Council issues through a Sub-Committee). Steps were being taken to raise awareness of this issue with Parish Councils but no action on the appointment of a Parish Council representative(s) is being taken until regulations and Government guidance are received.

There will also be a need to appoint a person, independent of the Authority, to serve on the Committee. Again, no action on this is being taken pending regulations and further Government guidance.

The report has been brought to the attention of all Members of the Council.

Councillor C A Wise  
**CHAIRMAN**

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