

REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

(Meeting held on 25 January 2008)

1. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2008/09 (REPORT E) (MINUTE 39)

Automatic Uprating of Allowances

Members may recall that in 2005, the Council agreed that members' allowances should be uprated annually using the Retail Price Index (All Items) percentage rate of inflation for the year to December. The Members' Allowances Scheme provides for the uprating to apply to the basic, special responsibility, dependent carer's and co-optees' allowances from 1 April in each following year. These new arrangements took effect from 1 April 2006.

The increase in the Retail Price Index (All Items) for the year to end of December 2007 was 4.3%. An uprating of 4.3% from 1 April 2008 should therefore be automatically applied to the basic, special responsibility and dependent carers' allowances, but the Council is required formally to make a scheme of members' allowances each year and therefore must resolve on the issue.

The increase of 4.3% exceeds the anticipated budget increase of 2.5%, and an Expenditure Plan bid of £10,000 has been submitted to the Cabinet.

The Council has previously agreed that the automatic uprating system should continue for a maximum of four years, or until the Remuneration Panel is re-convened to review the scheme. A review must therefore take place prior to the Municipal Year 2010/11.

Increase in Travel Allowance for members who 'car share'

Members may be aware that the Council has established a Green Audit Project Board which is looking across the whole of the Council's activities in the context of the "green agenda".

When considering the Council's use of vehicles (including commercial and fleet vehicles, and officers' and members' travel), one of the suggestions was to look at using mileage rates to encourage the use of more fuel efficient cars and also cut down on journeys made.

The Green Audit Project Board will be looking at these issues in more detail at a later date and any significant recommendations flowing from this affecting members' travel allowances will need to be submitted to the Independent Remuneration Panel, who will in turn need to make recommendations to the Standards Committee and ultimately the Council.

One relatively small measure which may have a minor impact on the number of journeys members make, which does not require reference to the Independent Remuneration Panel, is an adjustment to the additional allowance paid to members where they travel together on approved duties. The Committee is recommending a minor increase in the travel allowance paid to members who 'car share' when travelling with other district councillors on approved duties. The current rate is 2p per mile and it is proposed that this be increased to 5p per mile.

The financial effect of uprating the car share allowance from 2p per mile to 5p per mile is expected to be negligible.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) *That the Basic, Special Responsibility, Dependent Carers' and Co-optees' allowances embodied within the current Members' Allowances Scheme be uprated by 4.3% with effect from 1 April 2008.***
- (b) *That the Members' Allowances Scheme be amended to provide that, where members travel together on approved duties, the member using his/her motor vehicle be entitled to an additional allowance of 5p per mile per member passenger (increased from 2p per mile), from 1 April 2008.***

**Cllr J A G Hutchins
Vice-Chairman**