

## REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

(Meeting held on 27 January 2012)

### 1. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES - SCHEME TO APPLY FROM 1 APRIL 2012 AND AMALGAMATION OF ICT ALLOWANCE WITH BASIC ALLOWANCE (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 33)

The Council is required annually to make a scheme of members' allowances, which must be published. Before any changes are made to the scheme, the Council must receive a report from its Independent Remuneration Panel and have regard to the Panel's recommendations in considering the level of allowances.

In addition to the allowances set out in the Scheme, members of the Council receive an ICT allowance of £575 per year. This is a contribution towards the costs of the provision by councillors of computer and ancillary equipment, including broadband, and consumables used on Council business. The Committee reports having considered a recommendation from the Independent Remuneration Panel that the ICT allowance be rolled into the basic allowance.

Some members will recall that when e-communications began being used extensively in the 1990s, the Council provided members with ICT equipment, software, telephone lines, broadband facilities (as they became available) and consumables; and provided support for the equipment and to members in their use of that equipment. Over the years this position changed gradually to a situation where most members chose to provide their own ICT equipment, and the allowance was introduced to compensate them for using that equipment and providing consumables for Council business. There were demonstrable savings to the Council.

From May 2011, all Councillors have been required to provide their own ICT equipment and to arrange their own support, and all now receive the £575 ICT allowance. The Committee supports the Independent Remuneration Panel's view that it is now appropriate to amalgamate the ICT Allowance into the Councillor's Basic Allowance. This will increase the Basic Allowance from £5,316 to £5,891 per annum. No additional budget provision is required. The Committee also supports the Independent Remuneration Panel's view that the ICT element should be separately identified within the Basic Allowance so that it is clear that ICT costs are borne by Members out of the Basic Allowance. The Panel has indicated that it wishes to revisit the ICT element when next it undertakes a full review of allowances, to ensure that the amount of £575 still represents value for money for the Council.

With regard to the Scheme to apply from 1 April 2012, the Committee wishes to point out that the Scheme provides for basic, special responsibility, co-optees' and dependant carer's allowances to be adjusted by the amount of the employees' pay award. The 2012/13 employee pay claim is still being negotiated and, whilst the outcome of those negotiations cannot be predicted, if there is a pay award to employees, the scheme provides for any adjustment in Members' Allowances to be backdated to 1 April each year.

The Committee recommends that, other than the amalgamation of the ICT allowance, there be no further changes to the Scheme.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) *That the Members' ICT Allowance be amalgamated into the Basic Allowance and that, accordingly, the Members' Basic Allowance be increased by £575 from £5,316 to £5,891 per annum, with the ICT element being separately identified within the Basic Allowance.***
- (b) *That there be no further adjustments to the Members' Allowances Scheme for the year commencing 1 April 2012.***

**Cllr P R Woods  
VICE CHAIRMAN**