

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 provide that where an authority relies on an index for the annual adjustment of members' allowances, it must not do so for longer than 4 years without a recommendation from its Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). The Panel must comprise at least three members.
- 1.2 The Council's IRP last made a recommendation in relation to the Members' Allowances scheme in 2013 (for the scheme that applied from April 2014), so it is necessary to obtain a fresh recommendation later this year for the scheme to apply from April 2018. The Panel also considers parish and town council allowances where those councils already, or wish to, pay allowances to their members.

2. CURRENT PANEL

- 2.1 The following are members of the Council's Panel, with the dates of their initial appointments:
 - Dr Declan Hall (Panel Chairman) – former lecturer at the Institute of Local Government, University of Birmingham, who specialises in Councillors' roles, remuneration reviews and support. Dr Hall has chaired the IRP for the Council several times in the past. **Appointed 2010.**
 - Mrs Christine Ames – Membership Liaison Officer of New Forest Tourism Association and former Chairman of the New Forest Business Partnership. **Appointed 2003.**
 - A representative from South East Employers (SEE) (to be nominated by them). SEE have a wealth of external knowledge, benchmarking data from across the region and considerable experience in undertaking members' allowances reviews. **Appointed 2003 (persons representing SEE have fluctuated since then – the current member, Mark Palmer, has served since 2013).**

3. PANEL TO SERVE FOR 2017/18

- 3.1 The current Panel members have built up considerable knowledge and understanding of the Authority and the roles and responsibilities of its Councillors, and all have fulfilled their roles diligently. However, the members are long-serving and the Cabinet might wish to take the opportunity to refresh the Panel by replacing one or more of its members.
- 3.2 It is, however, important that members serving on the Panel have a thorough understanding of the roles and workloads of District Councillors (which can differ across Councils depending on meeting demands and members' representational roles), an appreciation of the political arrangements under which different councils operate, and a realistic approach to the general public's view on acceptable levels of allowances.

- 3.3 Dr Hall and Mr Palmer are professionals in this field with a wealth of academic and practical knowledge on the subject, Dr Hall nationally and Mark Palmer in the South East Region. Mrs Ames could be said to fulfil the essential role of a “lay” member of the Panel, with wide knowledge of the District, its residents and how Councillors engage with their communities, both with organisations representing business and communities, and individuals.
- 3.4 If the Cabinet is minded to make changes to the Panel, expressions of interest should be sought and arrangements made for interviewing potential members. It is suggested that it be left to the Executive Head for Governance and Regulation, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Panel, to agree arrangements for interviewing and making recommendations to the Cabinet for appointments to the Panel.
- 3.5 The current terms of reference of the Panel (attached at Appendix 1) remain appropriate and it is recommended that these be retained.
- 3.6 Officers will ascertain from Parish and Town Councils whether they wish the Panel to make recommendations for allowances to their councillors. Any costs of the Panel sitting as a Parish Remuneration Panel must be borne by the Parish and Town Councils concerned.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Payments to three IRP members are estimated to be in the region of £5,600. This can be met from existing budgets.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL, EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY AND CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 6.1 That the Cabinet considers whether to reappoint the existing IRP, or whether it wishes one or more members to be replaced.
- 6.2 That, if the Cabinet wishes to make changes to the Panel, the Executive Head of Governance and Regulation, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel, be authorised to agree the appointments process, including interviewing potential members, and to make recommendations to the Cabinet.
- 6.3 That no changes be made to the Panel’s terms of reference.

Further information

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Background papers: Published Documents