

Report of	Meeting	Date
Independent Remuneration Panel	Council	25 November 2015

REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME 2015

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel to the Council in relation to the four yearly review of Member's Allowances.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- That the Member Allowances Scheme continue in its current format with the following administrative amendments:
 - Any applications for additional travel allowances as a result of a complex illness or disability be determined by the Chief Executive of the Council.
 - Councillors to have the option to claim travel expenses either using the paper based option or the electronic system used by staff.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- The current Members' allowance Scheme was agreed in 2011 and the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 state that schemes should be reviewed as a minimum every four years. Minor changes to the current scheme had been agreed in 2013 to reflect some changing roles and a change to the standards procedure relating to the Members Code of Conduct and again in 2014 to better support those Members with disabilities using the Travel Scheme. A full review, however now needed to be undertaken in line with the regulations.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all		A strong local economy	
Clean, safe and healthy communities		An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	√

BACKGROUND

5. The current Independent Remuneration Panel is made up of three members of the public – Dennis Benson (Chair), Allan Jones and Tom Waring. The Panel met on 15 September 2015 to review the current Members' Allowance Scheme.
6. We received a report on the authority's Members Allowance Scheme that set out the requirements and provisions of the scheme. Recent changes to the scheme were noted and although some changes had been made since the scheme had been approved in December 2011, the annual cost of member's allowances still remained within budget.
7. A schedule of comparative information had been prepared which showed the Basic, Special Responsibility Allowances and other Allowances paid under Members Allowances Schemes for the Lancashire District Authorities. The allowances payable by the authority were in line with their neighbouring Councils.
8. We also received the latest annual notice of allowances that had been made payable to Members in 2014/15 and the results of a recent survey that Members of the Council had undertaken to give their views on the current scheme and levels of allowances. It was noted that the views of members were generally positive.

SPECIFIC ISSUES CONSIDERED

9. The Panel were still of a view that the scheme should be linked to the Local Government Officer Pay Award meaning that Members allowances would increase in line with the officers percentage increase or be frozen in times of a pay freeze. We considered that this was still a sensible approach as it showed no disparity.
10. Following a review of supporting Councillors with disabilities it had been agreed that additional travel allowance could be paid to a Councillor and that each case would be judged upon its own merits. This would be on application and would need supporting medical evidence. Whilst still agreeing to the principles of such a scheme and being happy with the process to be undertaken, as there had been no applications to date, we agreed that the decision on any such application could be delegated to the Chief Executive of the authority. The Panel would look to re-consider this approach if in future, the Council started to see a rise in the number of applications submitted.
11. In July 2013, it was agreed by the Council that the Independent Person on the Governance Committee be paid £500 per annum, in line with neighbouring authorities and reviewed after two years. Authorisation had also been given to appoint an additional person. We were informed that the current arrangements were working well and it had not been necessary to appoint an additional person. It was reported that the current Independent Person was actively involved with the Governance arrangements of the Council and had a good working relationship with the Council's Monitoring Officer so we thought it appropriate for the current arrangements to stay in place.
12. In September 2013 it had been agreed for Members to start using the electronic claim system in line with staff. However, in spring 2014 the Council issued each Councillor with an iPad, which did not have the functionality to connect with the electronic payment system in a user friendly manner, thus potentially preventing some members from applying. It is proposed to allow Councillors to have the option to claim for travel expenses using the paper based option that they used previously, on the basis of being fair to all.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

13. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	√	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	√	Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

14. The recommendations will not require any amendments to the budget.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

15. No comments.

DENNIS BENSON
CHAIR OF THE INDEPENDENT RENUMERATION PANEL

There are no background papers to this report.

Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
Members Allowance Scheme	***	Current Scheme	***

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Dianne Scambler	5034	21 October 2015	***