



Epping Forest District Council

MEMBER REMUNERATION PANEL Wednesday, 25th January, 2012

Place: Group Room, Room 1.19, First Floor, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 5.30 pm

Committee Secretary: Graham Lunnun, The Office of the Chief Executive
Email: democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk Tel 01992 564244

Members:

D Jackman, Ms R Kelly and S A Lye

1. CHAIRMAN

To elect a Chairman for the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING (Pages 5 - 8)

Attached for consideration.

4. MEMBER ROLE ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENTS (Pages 9 - 32)

The attached Member Role Accountability Statements have been adopted by the Council and are referred to the Panel to assist in making future recommendations regarding the amounts of allowances. The Panel has previously discussed the possibility of undertaking a form of job evaluation of the various roles.

5. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES - REVIEW (Pages 33 - 58)

To consider the attached report.

6. TRAVEL EXPENSES - CAR TRAVEL
(a) Approved Duties

The current Members' Remuneration Scheme specifies approved duties for the purpose of the payment of travelling and subsistence expenses. The list of duties includes "attendance at any meeting or other official function at the request of the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive or a Service Director including meetings between group representatives for a particular committee and officers."

The Panel is asked to consider an addition to the list of approved duties as follows in order to reflect meetings attended by Portfolio Holders and others in receipt of Special Responsibility Allowances, not necessarily at the request of those officers specified above –

"Consultation and briefing meetings at the request of officers by members of the Cabinet or others members in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance."

If the Panel is minded to recommend this inclusion, consideration should also be given as to whether Assistant Portfolio Holders should be entitled to claim since they are being encouraged to shadow Portfolio Holders although they do not receive any Special Responsibility Allowance at present.

(b) Rates for travel by Car

The Council's current Members' Remuneration Scheme provides that the normal rates for car travel are the same as the higher rates paid to officers classed as casual users. The officer rates are reviewed annually at national level by the Joint Council for Local Government Services.

Currently the rates are:

Use of a vehicle not exceeding 999cc – 46.9p per mile

Use of vehicle 1000cc – 1199cc – 52.2p per mile

Use of vehicle exceeding 1199cc – 65p per mile

Members receive a tax free approved amount when using their own vehicles. Currently the "Approved Mileage Allowance Payments" (tax free amounts) are 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles. Similar provisions apply to officers.

Tax is therefore payable in all three categories. One member who was entitled to 65p per mile has signed a written statement stating that she will restrict all of her claims to 45p per mile (or higher in line with any future increased tax free amounts) in order to avoid payment of tax on the expenses she receives for using her vehicle to Council meetings etc. Several authorities have adopted this rate for members and officers for all classes of vehicle.

The Panel is asked if it wishes to pursue this approach in relation to all member claims. If it does there will need to be discussions with members about whether the members' rates should be different from officers or whether consultations should take place with staff representatives about applying the approved mileage allowance payments to staff as well.

7. JOINT REMUNERATION PANEL

To note that in September 2011, Tendring District Council sought the views of other Essex District/Borough Councils on the “sharing” of an Independent Remuneration Panel.

Informal views were sought from members of the Council and officers comprising the Council’s Corporate Governance Group and the consensus was that unless some demonstrable benefits can be identified in terms of savings/efficiency there is unlikely to be support for the idea having regard to :

- (a) the current benefits of local knowledge of Panel members in the way the Council operates; the need for Panel members to devote considerably more time to a joint Panel;
- (b) the logistics of arranging/holding meetings of a joint Panel;
- (c) the limited costs currently associated with this Council's Panel;
- (d) the practicality of covering the requirements for the parish/town councils in the district which have or want a remuneration scheme.

Tendring were asked to keep us informed of developments but no further communication has been received.

8. BASIS OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES (Pages 59 - 60)

To note that at its meeting on 1 November 2011 the Council resolved:

“That this Council calls on the Government, through the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, to amend the rules on Councillors’ remuneration in order that:

- (a) potential candidates who are in receipt of state benefits are able to seek election without placing those state benefits at risk if elected; and
- (b) remuneration is based on a combination of attendance and basic allowance”.

A copy of the letter sent to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government is attached.

A response has been received thanking the Council for its views but stating that the suggestion will not be pursued.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING