

Notes of Informal Meeting held on 19 December 2007

Present: S Lye, D Jackman (Independent Remuneration Panel Members)
Councillor Mrs D Collins (Leader of Conservative Group and Leader of Council)
I Willett, G Lunnun

- Councillor Mrs Collins apologised for the Council not yet fully adopting the Panel's original recommendations. She advised that members had decided to be prudent but were now finding the role of Portfolio Holder quite onerous. 80/90% of decisions were taken by the Cabinet. The Cabinet had been reduced from 10 members to 8 and in May 2008 would be reduced further to 7 members. At present, there were 4 males and 4 females on the Cabinet and a split of 3/5 between those in full-time and retired part-time employment. The full-time ones were losing a lot in salary and unless allowances were increased, they would not be able to afford to continue as Councillors. She did not want to reach a position where all posts were held by retired people. An additional £30,000 had been put in the draft budget for 2008/09.
- She did not believe there was a need for a Deputy Leader's allowance and felt that the Staff Appeals and Complaints Panels could be amalgamated. She also felt that the Chairman of the JCC role undertaken by the Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio did not justify a separate allowance.
- Her Group's aim was to get the level of allowances right and then increase them yearly in line with inflation.
- She acknowledged the case for different levels of remuneration for Cabinet members. The Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio had the largest Portfolio. The Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio would disappear in May 2008 and the duties would be spread among the others. The Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder worked very hard and had a high profile although had a relatively small budget. The Housing Portfolio was relatively large. However, she would prefer not to undertake detailed evaluations of the roles at this stage in view of the changes proposed for next May. She also pointed out that all of the recently appointed Directors were paid the same amount based on external assessment and there was a desire to align the work of Portfolio Holders more closely with Directors. Further work would be required in allocating duties, e.g. some of the Deputy Leader's responsibilities would go to the Leisure Portfolio Holder in order to align them more closely with the Deputy Chief Executive. The ultimate aim was to achieve one to one.
- She pointed out that since the Panel had last looked at the scheme, there had been major changes in the delivery of the Highways and Leisure Services. Also, when there had been a balanced Council the officers had more responsibility but now members dictated what happened. Cabinet Members were acting more strategically than before.
- In relation to the basic allowance, she pointed out that a number of members were not active. She accepted the Council was not prescriptive enough about making sure members undertook training and believed an element of the basic allowance should be withheld if a % attendance was not achieved in relation to meetings/training.
- She did not consider the role of Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee justified the current allowance which was equal to that of a Portfolio Holder. The role was not too pro-active, was not arduous. She was not suggesting a reduction but questioned the need for any increase.

- In relation to the Leader's role, she did not believe this could be undertaken by someone in full-time employment. She estimated undertaking 30 hours per week taking decisions on a daily basis. She pointed out the increased liaison between the Leader and the Council's senior management.
- Although the Deputy Leader occasionally took the chair at Cabinet meetings in her absence the role did not justify a separate allowance. The current Deputy Leader was in agreement with this approach. She pointed out that the Deputy Leader did not need to be the Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder.
- She requested that the Panel look at an allowance for members chairing the Licensing Sub-Committees.
- In relation to Area Plans Sub-Committee Chairmen she pointed out their limited role outside of meetings.
- She felt the Group Leaders allowances were obsolete. There used to be regular meetings to facilitate business but were now rare with an administration in place.