

Report to Remuneration Panel

Date of meeting: 2 February 2022

Subject: Members' Allowances Scheme – Annual Review 2022/23

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That the Panel consider the issues set out in this report and agree any recommendations to be made to the Council in connection with its review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2022/23; and

(2) That the Panel agree arrangements for the presentation of its report and recommendations regarding the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme to the Council, at its meeting to be held on 24 February 2022.

Report:

1. The Panel undertakes a review of Epping Forest District Council's Members' Allowances Scheme each year, to ensure that any recommendations for revision to elements of the Scheme can be considered alongside the preparation of the authority's budget for the following financial year. The current Members' Allowances Scheme, for the 2021/22 municipal year, was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 18 February 2021 and is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

Members' Allowances Scheme

2. In considering the recommendations of the Panel in February 2021, the Council agreed that no change be made to the payment of the full amount of Basic Allowance of £4,300 per member per annum to be included in the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2021/22. An increase in Basic Allowance was introduced from 2016/17 in line with the recommendations of the Panel over several years, that the authority should implement 100% of the amount of Basic Allowance for each member, rather than the level of 80% previously applied.

3. The Council also agreed in December 2015 that, from the 2016/17 municipal year, consideration of the amount of Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) applied to the positions of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council be added to the responsibilities of the Remuneration Panel. Whilst no recommendations to increase this allowance were made for 2020/21, the level of such SRA should therefore be considered as part of the Panel's review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2020/21.

4. As part of the review process for 2020/21, a general invitation was extended to all members of the Council on behalf of the Panel, to express any suggestions or concerns about the current operation of the Members' Allowances Scheme. At the time of the preparation of this report, no representations arising from such invitation have been received from members. Any representations received after the publication of the agenda for this meeting will be reported to the Panel at the meeting.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Restructure

5. The Panel was advised that, with effect from the commencement of the 2019/20 municipal year, the Council had adopted a structure of three new overview and scrutiny

select committees, replacing the former structure of four select committees. These revised select committees are:

- Stronger Communities Select Committee;
- Stronger Council Select Committee; and
- Stronger Place Select Committee.

6. The current Members' Allowances Scheme provides that an annual SRA of £2,150.00 be applied to the positions of the chairmen of the select committees. The reduction of the overview and scrutiny framework to the three select committees did generate a saving to the previous budget provision for members' allowances.

Other Matters

7. As previously stated, no suggestions or concerns about the current operation of the Members' Allowances Scheme have been received from members. If any are received following the publication of the agenda then they will be reported to the Panel.

Benchmarking

8. At its meeting on 29 November 2018, the Panel requested that a comprehensive benchmarking exercise amongst comparable local authorities be undertaken as part of future reviews by the Panel of the Members' Allowances Scheme. This enables the Panel to assess whether an inflationary increase in the level of Basic Allowance should be considered;

9. The results of the benchmarking exercise has been prepared and is attached at Appendix 2 of this report.

10. In addition, the Panel requested last year for information regarding certain indices such as the rate of growth of earnings, and the current rate of inflation amongst others. This information has again been provided for the Panel and is attached at Appendix 3 of this report.

Recommendations

11. The Panel is requested to consider the issues set out in this report and to agree the general matters to be subject of its recommendations to the Council in connection with the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2022/23.

12. It is intended that the report of the Panel will be made to the Council at its meeting on 24 February 2022. The Panel is also therefore requested to agree which of its membership will present the report to the Council.