

## EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Committee:** Member Remuneration Panel **Date:** 9 March 2015

**Subject:** Remuneration and Expenses Scheme - Special Responsibility Allowance

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### **Recommendation:**

#### **That the Panel:**

- (a) consider whether a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) should be applied to the position of the Chairman of the Constitution Working Group to be established with effect from the commencement of the 2015/16 municipal year; and**
- (b) subject to (a) above, make an appropriate recommendation to the Council on the level of SRA that it considers appropriate in the short and longer term.**

### **Report:**

1. A review has recently been undertaken of the Council's existing overview and scrutiny panel framework, in light of the adoption of its new management structure in December 2013, which resulted in a reduction from seven service directorates to four.
2. A new proposed framework, which is substantially aligned with the management structure, has recently agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Appendix 1). The new framework has the effect of reducing the number of scrutiny panels (from five) through the alignment of scrutiny responsibilities with those of the service directorates in the form of four new 'select committees' and the effective deletion of the existing Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel.
3. The Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel is responsible for the ongoing maintenance and review of the Council's constitution and all matters relating to its members. The Panel has recently commenced a root and branch review of the constitution, which has not been undertaken for a considerable number of years. This work is not anticipated to be completed until at least March 2016.
4. Under the framework option favoured by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it has been agreed that the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel should be wound-up from the commencement of the 2015/16 municipal year to facilitate the new select committee arrangements, but that it should then be re-established as a 'Constitution Working Group' in order to complete its outstanding work on the review of the constitution. As a result of the refocusing of the work programme of the new working group to matters concerning the constitution only, issues relating to members that would previously have been dealt with by the Scrutiny Panel will be transferred to a new select committee with responsibility for the functions of the Governance Directorate, which includes democratic and member services.

5. It is likely that, on completion of its review of the constitution in 2016, the Working Group may only then meet as occasionally necessary to consider specific constitutional issues, as it is anticipated that no similar review of the constitution would then be required for a number of years.
6. The review of the constitution is an important and complex piece of work and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has recommended that a Special Responsibility Allowance should be applied to the Chairman of the Working Group. This matter is outside the responsibility of the Committee, and must be agreed by the Council on the recommendation of the Member Remuneration Panel.
7. In accordance with the Council's current Remuneration and Expenses Scheme as last reviewed by the Panel in January 2014 (Appendix 2), a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) of £2,150 per annum is made to the chairmen of each of the standing scrutiny panels. At the time of the last review of the Scheme, this included the Chairman of the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel. Clearly, as a result of the concurrent disbandment of the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel, this approach would be cost neutral in terms of the Council's budget.
8. The Remuneration Panel is therefore asked to consider whether a Special Responsibility Allowance should be introduced for the Chairman of the Constitution Working Group to be established with effect from the commencement of the 2015/16 municipal year. The Panel is also requested to consider whether such an SRA should be reviewed after the completion of the current review of the constitution, given that it is likely that the new Working Group will only need to meet infrequently thereafter. If agreed, this proposal will require minor amendments to the Remuneration and Expenses Scheme, to reflect the establishment of the Working Group.
9. Officers will report to the Panel in connection with arrangements for the future review of the Remuneration and Expenses Scheme, which will also need to reflect the re-establishment of the existing standing scrutiny panels as the new select committees.