

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

Councillor Mrs L Clarke OBE, Chairman of the Allowances Sub Group

Wards affected: None directly

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL:

That

- (a) the proposed recommendations from the Allowances Sub Group, as set out at paragraph 10 of the report, be agreed.
- (b) the Council's budget be amended to fund the additional financial requirement, and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Head of Finance & Commercial Services be asked to identify how the additional financial requirement is met.

Corporate Implications

1. Changes to the Constitution are made by Council, following recommendation from this Committee or Cabinet or another committee if appropriate.
2. The proposals set out within this report propose amendments to the Members' Allowances Scheme, which forms part of the Council's Constitution.
3. The proposals result in an additional budget requirement of £114,376. There is currently no budgetary provision for increases in members' allowances.

Executive Summary

4. This report sets out proposed amendments to the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme, following work undertaken by the Allowances Sub Group.

Background and Issues

5. At the meeting of the Regulatory and Appeals Committee held on 2 November 2015, Members were presented with the report from the Independent Remuneration Panel setting out recommendations following their review of members' allowances. The Committee considered these recommendations in detail and in turn, made onward recommendations to Full Council. A copy of the report and Minutes of the Regulatory and Appeals Committee, setting out the Committee's responses to each of the Panel's recommendations are set out at appendix A to this report.
6. These recommendations included the establishment of a sub-group, comprising Councillors Mrs Clarke OBE, Collingwood, Green, and Knights,

to undertake further work in relation to four outstanding issues.

7. Firstly, the Committee felt that the Leader's allowance should be set higher than that of the Chairman of the Council and asked the Sub-Group to undertake further work on these levels. Secondly, the Committee rejected the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendation that the level of the basic allowance should remain unchanged, and that there should be an increase. Members asked the Sub-Group to undertake further work on this matter, and report back to this Committee. Thirdly, the Committee rejected the Panel's recommendation that a special responsibility allowance of £50 per Planning Committee site visit be introduced to replace the existing special responsibility payment to Planning Committee Members. The Committee felt that something should be put in place to recognise this aspect but that the Sub-Group should give further consideration to this and report back to the Committee. The final issue related to the rejection by the Committee of the Panel's recommendation to introduce a special responsibility payment of £50 per meeting at Licensing Panels, and the request for the Sub-Group to consider this further and report back to Members.
8. The Committee's recommendations were agreed by Full Council at their meeting held on 14th December 2015.
9. The Sub-Group has completed its work on these issues, and are now reporting back to the Regulatory and Appeals Committee on the outcome of their deliberations. To assist with their work, the Sub-Group received information relating to the level of allowances from neighbouring District and Borough Authorities with a similar size population as the Council. Information relating to the level of allowances from neighbouring Buckinghamshire Authorities was also taken into account. The Sub-Group also noted that the level of the basic allowance for Members of the Council had not been increased for a number of years, other than in line with annual pay increases received by staff.

Proposals

10. The Committee is invited to consider the following recommendations from the Sub-Group:
 - a) Basic Allowance – Having noted that this allowance had not been increased for a number of years, and in noting that the average level of the basic allowance of the top 12 District and Borough Councils via population was £6,100, it is proposed that the basic allowance be increased to £6,000.
 - b) Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for Chairmen of Regulatory & Appeals, High Wycombe Town, Audit, and Licensing Committees – in order to reflect the workload of these positions, it is proposed to amend the 'multiplier' in the current Scheme from 0.25 x basic allowance to 0.5 x basic allowance. Multiplier for other Chairmen

positions to remain unchanged.

- c) SRA for Chairman of Improvement and Review Commission – in order to reflect the workload of this position, it is proposed that the ‘multiplier’ in the current Scheme be amended from 0.75 x basic allowance to 1 x basic allowance.
- d) SRA for Vice-Chairmen of Committees – It is proposed to amend the multiplier in the Scheme from the current level of 0.25 x basic allowance to 0.5 x basic allowance of the relevant Chairman’s level.
- e) The Chairman of the Council’s Allowance – The Sub-Group considered in detail the level of the Chairmen and Mayor’s allowance for the top 12 District and Borough Councils via population, together with neighbouring Buckinghamshire Authorities. Having also noted the Regulatory and Appeals Committee’s comments that the level of the Leader’s allowance should be higher than that of the Chairman’s, it is proposed that the Chairman’s allowance be set as basic allowance x 2. This is a reduction from the current level of £15,500.
- f) The Vice-Chairman of the Council’s Allowance – It is proposed that this should be set as basic allowance x 0.75. This results in an increase from the existing level of £2,700.
- g) Daytime Meeting SRA Payment – It is proposed that the existing SRA payment to Planning Committee members in the Scheme is removed, and replaced by a daytime meeting SRA payment of £100 per meeting. This will apply to Members attending planning site visits, daytime meetings of the Licensing Panel, and any daytime meetings of the Regulatory & Appeals Committee or its panels. This payment would not be payable to Cabinet or Deputy Cabinet members, or to any Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen.
- h) SRA for Deputy Cabinet Members – It is proposed that this payment is withdrawn from the Scheme and that should the Leader wish to make a payment to Deputy Cabinet Members, this should be drawn from the ‘Cabinet pot’ of allowances, i.e. temporary levels would need to be put in place to fund these positions by reducing the levels for the other Cabinet positions. The Scheme does provide for temporary variations to be made and this is what the current Leader has implemented with her own Cabinet positions.
- i) Link to Officer pay (national pay settlements) and annual increase – it is proposed to maintain the existing link to Officer pay when a national pay settlement is agreed, and the allowances should also receive an annual increase in line with the level of RPI each year.
- j) Implementation of Proposals – The Sub-Group recommend that the above proposals should be implemented with effect from the Annual Council meeting on 24 May 2016 (backdated).

- k) Future Independent Remuneration Panel reviews – it is proposed that the Council adopt a four yearly review cycle, to be held in the last year of a Council term.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. There is currently no budgetary provision for increases in members' allowances. Implementation of the above proposals will result in an additional budget requirement of £114,376.

Next steps

12. The recommendations from the Committee will be considered by Full Council at their next meeting on 18 July 2016.

Background Papers

Members Allowances Scheme

Regulatory and Appeals Committee report 2 November

Allowances from Other Local Authorities