

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

24 June 2013

Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Transformation

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Council

1 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

This report seeks the Committee's support for a slight amendment to the Scheme of Members' Allowances that was recommended and subsequently adopted by Full Council in April. The Independent Remuneration Panel is being consulted on this proposed minor change, and feedback will be given on the evening of the meeting.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Members may recall that in April, this Committee considered a report from the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) regarding Members Allowances for the Municipal year 2013/14 onwards, alongside some alternative suggestions from officers in response to Member 'concerns' about the level of allowances in totality.

1.1.2 Following a comprehensive and inclusive debate, recommendations were formulated by the Committee and were subsequently adopted by Council at its meeting on 16 April, to come into effect from 14 May. The Scheme was published in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

1.1.3 One of those decisions concerned allowances payable to Vice-Chairmen. Based on a proposal from the 'floor' at the meeting, it was recommended (and subsequently determined at Full Council) that Vice-Chair allowances should continue to be paid (contrary to recommendations from the IRP) but that, where there are two such appointments to a committee, only the 'first' Vice-Chairman should receive the allowance.

1.2 Overview & Scrutiny Committee

1.2.1 At Annual Council on 14 May, two Vice-Chairman appointments were made to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

1.2.2 That Committee met on 11 June to consider its work programme for the year. The work programme is being driven largely by the need to identify significant

financial savings to achieve the targets as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy over the next five to six years. As set out in the report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee, *'the Committee will be asked to look at a series of areas of service, as agreed by the Management Team, and to undertake a review of that area of service to evaluate the scope for change and the potential to generate cashable savings. The Committee will also need to take account of what impact any potential change might have on existing service users and existing staffing arrangements and come to a balanced view for recommendation to the Cabinet'*. This is a significant challenge and will require in-depth work.

- 1.2.3 The first two identified 'areas' will be tackled by informal review groups drawn from the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Meetings of the review groups will be arranged in the period between programmed meetings of the main Committee and the Chairmen of each review group have been asked to present their findings for formal endorsement and for recommendation to the Cabinet. **The review groups are to be chaired by the two Vice-Chairmen.**
- 1.2.4 With hindsight, therefore, rather than there being a 'first' and 'second' appointed Vice-Chairman, it would appear that the two Vice-Chairmen will have equal status and an equal workload.
- 1.2.5 It is, therefore, proposed, in consultation with the Leader, that provision for 'joint Vice-Chair' status is introduced into the Scheme of Allowances to cater for this exception. Each Vice-Chair would receive the agreed allowance; which in the case of Overview & Scrutiny Committee is £1,269 per annum.

1.3 Independent Remuneration Panel

- 1.3.1 Any changes to the Scheme (however minor) need to be reviewed by the Panel and a recommendation needs to be forthcoming from them for Members to consider.
- 1.3.2 At the time of writing, we have invited the Panel's thoughts and are due to receive feedback by 20 June. We shall update Members at the meeting.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 The Joint Independent Remuneration Panel ('the Panel') was established in November 2001 under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2001. These Regulations have since been superseded by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.
- 1.4.2 The law requires that no changes to the Scheme of Members' Allowances can be made until the report of the IRP has been considered. The Council is not obliged to adopt the recommendations of the IRP but it is obliged to publish what the IRP recommended and what the Council determined.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 Significant savings were made when the Committee recommended, and Full Council adopted, the new Scheme in April. This minor adjustment, if agreed, can be accommodated within the overall budget.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 The Council must consider the recommendations of the Panel and publish its decision.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 **Subject** to feedback from the IRP that will be provided on the evening of the meeting, Members are **invited** to consider the proposal to introduce the concept of 'joint Vice-Chairs' into the Scheme of Members Allowances together with the associated special responsibility allowance, and make a **RECOMMENDATION** to Full Council accordingly.

Background papers:

Nil

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Director of Finance & Transformation

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	Update to Scheme
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	Vice-Chairman with equal workload will receive equivalent allowance
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.