

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Monday, 3rd July, 2023

Present: Cllr M R Rhodes (Chair), Cllr M A Coffin (Vice-Chair), Cllr B Banks, Cllr K Barton, Cllr A G Bennison, Cllr J Clokey, Cllr D A S Davis, Cllr A McDermott, Cllr B A Parry, Cllr R V Roud and Cllr K B Tanner

In attendance: Councillors P M Hickmott, M A J Hood and M Taylor were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Virtual: Councillors R P Betts, M D Boughton, C Brown, R I B Cannon, R W Dalton, S A Hudson, D Keers and Mrs A S Oakley participated via MS Teams in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

GP 23/20 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There was no notification of substitute members received.

GP 23/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to allow all Members of the Committee to participate in the discussion on Members Allowances and to consider and vote upon the recommendations contained within the report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel under s33 of the Localism Act 2011.

GP 23/22 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 15 March 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

GP 23/23 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES - REPORT OF THE JOINT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The report of the Management Team set out details of a recent review undertaken by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (JIRP) on the Scheme of Members' Allowances and summarised the key recommendations arising from the Panel at 1.2.4 of the report.

Management Team advised that the recommendations of the Panel, if adopted, would produce a saving of circa £45,900 when compared to the budget included within the 2023/24 Estimates.

The Committee recognised the considerable work undertaken by the Panel in evaluating the role undertaken by Members and acknowledged the case made for a reduction in the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Deputy Leader. However, the Committee felt that it was neither appropriate nor fair to reduce the allowance in consideration of the significant responsibilities of this role.

Members recognised the value and role of the vice-chairs and considered it appropriate to set an allowance to vice-chairs at a level based on 25% of the relevant chairman's allowance.

Following a comprehensive debate it was

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) the Basic Allowance payable to all Members remain at its current level of £5,175 per annum;
- (2) the level of the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) be set as follows:
 - (a) the Leader's Allowance remain at £20,706 per annum;
 - (b) the SRA for the Deputy Leader remain at £15,528 per annum (circa 75% of the Leader's Allowance);
 - (c) the SRAs for Cabinet Members remain at £8,802 per annum;
 - (d) the SRAs for Committee Chairs be set as follows:
 - (i) Area Planning Committees (x 3) - £1,725 per annum;
 - (ii) Audit Committee - £2,589 per annum;
 - (iii) General Purposes Committee - £1,725 per annum;
 - (iv) Joint Standards Committee - £2,589 per annum;
 - (v) Licensing and Appeals Committee - £2,589 per annum;
 - (vi) Overview and Scrutiny Committee - £2,589 per annum;

- (vii) Scrutiny Select Committees (x 3) - £2,589 per annum;
- (e) the SRAs for qualifying** opposition group leaders be set at a flat sum of £4,401 per annum, and where applicable, a maximum of one additional SRA per Member (excluding group leader allowances) be applied;

***To qualify, neither the leader of an opposition group nor any members of the leader's group can serve on Cabinet.*
- (f) the SRAs for vice-chairs be set at 25% of the relevant Committee Chairs' allowances as follows:
 - (i) Area Planning Committees (x 3) - £431 per annum;
 - (ii) Audit Committee - £647 per annum;
 - (iii) General Purposes Committee - £431 per annum;
 - (iv) Joint Standards Committee - £647 per annum;
 - (v) Licensing and Appeals Committee - £647 per annum;
 - (vi) Overview and Scrutiny Committee - £647 per annum;
 - (vii) Scrutiny Select Committees (x 3) - £647 per annum;
- (3) the Mileage Allowances remain at the HMRC approved rate;
- (4) the existing scheme for meal and/or subsistence allowances be ceased;
- (5) the carers' allowances be set at a maximum rate of £10.42 per hour per child (linked to the National Living Wage) for general childcare and £18.00 per hour for dependent carers;
- (6) the allowances, including those for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, be updated in line with any increases in the remuneration of Council staff;
- (7) the amended scheme of allowances, once approved, be agreed to take effect from the date of Council on 11 July 2023; and
- (8) the Monitoring Officer be authorised to update Part 6 of the Constitution (Members' Allowances) to reflect any agreed changes to the current scheme of allowances arising out of the above recommendations.

***Referred to Council**

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

GP 23/24 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman moved, it was seconded and

RESOLVED: That as public discussion would disclose exempt information, the following matters be considered in private.

PART 2 - PRIVATE

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

GP 23/25 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ISSUES WITHIN THE PLANNING SERVICE

(Reasons: LGA 1972 - Sch 12A Paragraph 1 – Information relating to an individual)

Careful consideration was given to a number of options proposed to address the recruitment and retention issues in the Planning Service within the context of the national picture of staffing situation in council planning departments.

Members had due regard to the recruitment campaigns undertaken in the past year, the interim staffing costs, the benchmark data on salary packages from Kent district councils, the risk assessment and the legal, financial and value for money considerations arising from the proposals, with particular reference made to maintaining competitiveness of the Borough Council in the recruitment market for the qualified Planner posts.

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) a £5,000 annual market supplement payment (pro-rata'd for part-time staff) be paid to all current and future recruited qualified** Planning staff for a period of two years, subject to annual review thereafter;

***To qualify, the postholder must hold a degree or postgraduate qualification accredited by the Royal Town Planning Institute as stipulated in the Person Specification of their post in Planning.*

- (2) a £3,000 'Golden Hello' payment be paid to newly recruited Planning staff joining the Borough Council in posts in Planning of which the Person Specification stipulates that the postholder must

hold a degree or postgraduate qualification accredited by the Royal Town Planning Institute, subject to review; and

- (3) the aggregated cost of the market supplement payments and the 'Golden Hello' payments, estimated to be circa £320k over the two-year review period, be met from the Budget Stabilisation Reserve.

***Referred to Council**

DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

GP 23/26 ESTABLISHMENT REPORT

(Reasons: LGA 1972 - Sch 12A Paragraph 1 – Information relating to an individual)

The report set out for Members' approval a number of establishment changes recommended by Management Team. Members noted that, in accordance with adopted conventions, all of the savings/costs referred to in the report reflected the salary at the top of the scale/grade plus associated on costs.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) post DF1123, Overpayment Recovery Assistant, scale 2/3, 37 hours, be deleted;
- (2) a new Overpayment Recovery Officer post, at scale 2/3/4 for 30 hours per week, be created;
- (3) post DJ0210, Building Control Surveyor, grade M9, 25.5 hours per week, be deleted;
- (4) post DJ0216, Building Control Surveyor, grade M9, 37 hours per week, be deleted;
- (5) a new Senior Building Control Surveyor post, M8, 37 hours per week, be created;
- (6) the permanent increase in hours of the Building Control Technician post DJ0213 by correcting the hours from 22.5 to 29.5 per week be approved;
- (7) the temporary increase of the Building Control Technician post DJ0213 to a Senior Building Control Technician grade 5/6 for a period of six months and the increase in the hours to 35.5 per week for a period of six months be approved; and

- (8) the 'ringfencing' of the savings made by the deletion of post DJ0210 for a period of six months to allow time to review the needs of the Building Control service be agreed.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm
having commenced at 7.45 pm