

The Independent Welland Remuneration Panel

Report to Melton Council Meeting

Review of Member Allowances

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Government (Members' Allowances) 2003 Regulations put in place a consolidated and simplified framework for allowances that covers Principal Councils and Parish and Town Councils.
- 1.2 Part 4 of the Regulations makes provision for the establishment of an Independent Panel to make recommendations concerning Allowances. The Welland Remuneration Panel – now comprising John Cade (Chairman), John Greenwood, Gordon Wells and Ian Davis – is compliant with the necessary arrangements.
- 1.3 We met, as a Panel, at Parkside, Melton Mowbray on Tuesday 6th September 2016. As is our normal practice, we asked to see the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive, with an opportunity extended to every other Member of the Council to give oral evidence to us or to provide their comments by email.
- 1.4 No Councillors asked to see us. We received written comments from Councillors Rhodes, Illingworth and Orson.
- 1.5 We are grateful for these comments and we are also very appreciative again for the support we received from Sarah Evans.

2. Context

- 2.1 This can be a short report as there seems to be a general acceptance that the present allowances structure should be retained provided the rates continue to be index linked to the NJC Pay Awards.

- 2.2 However, in the course of our discussion with the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive a particular issue was raised with us. This is the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) paid to Committee Chairs and the Deputy Leader.
- 2.3 We had asked, in order to provide a comparative context for our review, to see the equivalent allowances paid in other neighbouring Authorities. Most were in a similar range, the exception being that for Committee Chairs and the Deputy Leader where they were near or at the bottom end.
- 2.4 We were mindful of two considerations here:
- a) As in her previous evidence to us, the Chief Executive said that she considered Melton Council to be very much Member-led and that when speaking to Officers in other Councils she was not necessarily hearing the same level of community engagement and commitment in representation of a wide range of views/and issues through community involvement. She was, therefore, surprised, given the role of Chairs and the Deputy Leader at their relative SRA positions.
 - b) It is never a good time to recommend an increase in Allowances but especially not at a time of budget cuts and with uncertainty in the economy.
- 2.5 In weighing up these respective considerations we came to the view that, given that we agreed with the points made to us, some uplift in the SRAs for Committee Chairs and the Deputy Leader was appropriate. And, of course, the responsibility allowance is for the post; it is up to the individual whether he/she elects to take it.
- 2.6 Historically the SRAs for Committee Chairs and Deputy Leader are pitched at 75% of the Basic Allowance. We believe that this should now be increased to 85% providing for a Special Responsibility Allowance of £3,964.

3. Budget implications

- 3.1 If our recommendation to increase the SRAs to Committee Chairs and the Deputy Leader from a rate of 75% of Basic Allowance to 85% of Basic Allowance (providing individual increases for 6 of the Chairs and the Deputy Leader of £465 pa before tax and for one Chair of £233 pa before tax) the total cost would be £3,488. It would be less if individual Members opted to decline the amount, but the increased Special Responsibility Allowance would remain attached to the posts.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 That the Basic Allowance remains unaltered.
- 4.2 That the Special Responsibility Allowance for Committee Chairs and the Deputy Leader be increased to £3,964 pa apart from the Chair of the Appeals Committee where it will be to £2,100 pa.
- 4.3 That all other Special Responsibility Allowances remain the same.
- 4.4 That no change be made to the Travel and Subsistence Expenses Scheme or the Childcare and Carers Allowance Scheme.
- 4.5 That allowances continue to be index linked to NJC Pay Awards

John Cade

Chairman

Welland Independent Remuneration Panel

September 2016