

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

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To: COUNCIL

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Councillors' allowances scheme

Recommendations

That Council:

1. considers the recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel;
2. authorises the head of legal and democratic services to finalise a councillors' allowances scheme based on the decision in 1 and to make any consequential amendments to the constitution;
3. agrees that the revised scheme should apply from 1 April 2017 but that any reductions will take effect from 19 May 2017;
4. thanks the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel for their work in reviewing the councillors' allowance scheme.

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the report and the recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (the panel) on a revised councillors' allowances scheme and to agree a scheme of allowances to run from 1 April 2017.

Background

2. The Local Government Act 2000 and Local Government (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require the council to appoint an independent remuneration panel to review its councillors' allowances scheme and make recommendations on the level of allowances to be paid. Council is responsible for setting the scheme of allowances having regard to the panel's recommendations.

3. At its meeting in May 2016 Council agreed to establish a joint independent remuneration panel with Vale of White Horse District Council to carry out reviews of the councillors' allowances schemes at both councils.
4. At that meeting Council authorised the head of legal and democratic services to make appointments to the panel. Four members were appointed as panel members including Mark Palmer, Development Director, South East Employers who acted as chairman and provided a training programme for panel members. Officers from democratic services provided administrative support.

Panel report

5. The recommendations of the panel, which met three times during January 2017, are set out in the attached report at appendix 1. The report details the reasons and rationale for the recommendations made by the panel. The recommended allowances are summarised below:

	CURRENT ALLOWANCES £	2017/2018 RECOMMENDATIONS £	RATIONALE & METHODOLOGY
Basic Allowance	4,644	4,633	
Leader of The Council	18,423	18,532	4 x Basic Allowance
Deputy Leader	-	12,973	70% of Leader
Cabinet Members	8,597	9,266	50% of Leader
Chairman of Council	4,913	4,633	25% of Leader
Vice Chairman of Council	1,228	1,390	30% of Chairman of Council
Chairman of Scrutiny Committee	2,070	2,780	15% of Leader
Vice Chairman of Scrutiny Committee	No allowance	No allowance	
Chairman of Planning Committee	4,913	5,560	30% of Leader
Vice Chairman of Planning Committee	No allowance	2,780	50% of Chairman of Planning Committee
Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee	1,228	1,390	7.5% of Leader
Leader of Main Opposition Group	1,228	1,853¹	10% of Leader
Chairman of General Licensing Committee	2,071	1,853	10% of Leader

¹ ** Allowance payable subject to the Political Group having at least 15% of the total Council Members (South Oxfordshire District Council 5 group members)

Chairman of Licensing Acts Committee	518	Allowance withdrawn	
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6. Council is required to approve a councillors' allowance scheme to comply with The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The options are:-
- (i) to accept the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel
 - (ii) to reject all or some of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel and agree alternative allowances if in any cases it does not consider them appropriate.
7. If Council agrees to implement a scheme from 1 April 2017 any increase in allowances will be backdated but it is recommended that any reductions should take effect from 19 May 2017.

Financial Implications

8. The 2017/18 budget includes £166,232 provision for councillors' basic allowances and £96,584 for special responsibility allowances. If all the recommendations within the report, totalling £276,128, are implemented this will result in an additional cost of £13,312. For the 2017/18 financial year the increased costs will be met from underspends and/or contingency. Officers will submit an essential growth bid to cover the increased costs during the 2018/19 budget setting process.

Legal Implications

9. Under the Local Government (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, local authorities are required to have Independent Remuneration Panels for the purpose of reviewing their schemes of councillors' allowances. Council is required to have regard to the recommendations of the panel when making or revising a scheme of allowances. However it does not have to accept the recommendations if it does not consider them appropriate.

Conclusion

10. The Independent Remuneration Panel has undertaken a review of the councillors' allowances scheme. Council is requested to consider the recommendations set out in the report and agree a scheme of allowances to run from 1 April 2017 with any reductions taking effect from 19 May 2017.