

# COUNCIL

21 JANUARY 2020

## REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND ELECTIONS

### A.2 HIGH LEVEL LIGHT-TOUCH REVIEW OF THE SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES FOR COUNCILLORS BY THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

(Report prepared by Keith Simmons)

#### PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

##### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To receive and consider the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel and determine any changes to the Scheme of Allowances for Councillors 2019/20.

##### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with the decision of Council at its annual meeting on 28 May 2019, when the current scheme of Allowances for Councillors was approved, the Independent Remuneration Panel has undertaken a high level and light touch review of that scheme and the Panel's report on that review is set out at Appendix A.

##### RECOMMENDATION(S)

- (a) That the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, following that Panel's high level and light touch review of the current Scheme of Allowances for Councillors, as set out at Appendix A be received and considered;
- (b) That the response to the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel set out below be determined:
- (1) That, in respect for the proposal for the re-introduction of a Vice-Chairman's Allowance in respect of the Planning Committee, Council approve either:
- (a) Retention of the current position:
- a. Chairman of Planning Committee - £6,600
  - b. All other Members of Planning Committee (including the Vice-Chairman) - £900
- (b) Adjust the allowances in respect of Planning Committee to the following:
- a. Chairman of Planning Committee - £6000,
  - b. Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee - £1500,
  - c. All other Members of the Planning Committee - £900.
- (2) To make no other change to the scheme of Allowances recommended to, and adopted by, Tendring District Council at its meeting on 28 May 2019.
- (c) To note that the Independent Remuneration Panel invites submissions for its full review of the Scheme of Allowances for Councillors (to be conducted in March 2020) and specifically on the issues of Group Leader Allowances and the default position of one Special Responsibility Allowance being claimable by an individual Councillor.

## PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

### DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The adoption of a published Scheme of Allowances for Councillors, having regard to the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel, is consistent with the Council's core values of integrity and openness.

### FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

#### Finance and other resources

The budget for 2019/20 for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances for Councillors and for the Council's Chairman and Vice Chairman Allowances totals £402,890. This reflects a reduction of £60,000 to recognise the recent decrease in the number of Councillors. The cost of the proposed scheme is within budget based on the current council and committee structure.

#### Risk

The crucial feature of the Panel is that it is composed of people unconnected with the local authority. This degree of independence is designed to secure that the Council is directly accountable to the electorate in respect of the payments made to Councillors and that the risk of any lack of transparency is mitigated.

### LEGAL

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 set out the arrangements to be followed in relation to allowances and expenses payable to Councillors. The Regulations set out that regard must be had to the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel before determining or amending the Scheme of Allowances. Consideration of this report and its appendix will enable the Council to meet those statutory requirements.

The Local Government Act 1972 (sections 3 and 5) allows the payment of an allowance to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council.

### OTHER IMPLICATIONS

#### Councillors' Responsibility For Reporting Receipt of Allowances

Councillors are advised to declare the receipt of an allowance if **any form** of benefit such as income support or housing benefit is being claimed. The rules on how allowances to Councillors are treated may vary depending on the benefit claimed and advice should be sought from the relevant administering body. For example, the rules for those in receipt of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support state that "basic members allowance, special responsibility allowance and conference attendance allowance are treated as earnings except for any expenses which have been wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred in the performance of their duties". Councillors are therefore advised that in order to claim expenses in these circumstances receipts and records to justify the expenses incurred must be kept.

#### Wards Affected

None.

## **PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION**

There are no background papers

### **APPENDICES**

Appendix A –Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel