

COUNCIL

2 MARCH 2023

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A.5 TERM OF OFFICE FOR MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL'S INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

(Report prepared by Lisa Hastings)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To enable the Council to consider an extension to the term of office for the members of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) following Council's decision on 24 January 2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The term of office for the existing Independent Remuneration Panel lasts until Annual Council in May 2023.

Following a reference report from the Standards Committee, Council approved on 22 November 2022 (minute no. 52):

- (a) that alternative arrangements for the Independent Remuneration Panel are explored further in order to maximise options available with other Councils within Essex and to give consideration to the outcome prior to any future recruitment; and*
- (b) that the term of office for those Independent Persons, who express an interest in doing so, be extended for a further year without an application process, in order to allow the review within recommendation (a) above to be undertaken.*

The reason for only extending the Independent Person part of the role was on the basis that, in January 2023, it was anticipated, the Independent Remuneration Panel would present to Full Council, a Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2023/24 until 2027/28. Therefore, should Council approve such a Scheme, joint working could be explored until the recommendations of the IRP would be required.

At its meeting in January 2023, the Council received the Report of the Head of Democratic Services and Elections following the Review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances by the IRP. It was moved by Councillor Stock OBE and seconded by Councillor M E Stephenson that (note: extract only for the purposes of the report) –

- (a) the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (set out in the Appendix to this report), following that Panel's review of the appropriate uplift to be applied to Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances in the scheme for 2022/23 and the Scheme of Allowances for Councillors for 2023/24 (and until 2027/28) be welcomed and duly noted;*
- (b) that the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel set out on pages 10-13 of the Appendix be agreed in full;*

...

One of the recommendations from the IRP (No. (6)) stated:

“That there be an expectation that no Councillor be eligible to claim more than two separate Special Responsibility Allowances; Reason: The Allowances Scheme needs to set remuneration at an appropriate level and the undertaking of different roles by an individual Councillor should be recompensed appropriately. It is important to preserve the capacity of Councillors to undertake their Ward related activities with resident casework. Under this expectation, a Councillor otherwise eligible for more than two Special Responsibility Allowances should not normally take that/those further Allowances. However, if they make the specific case and lodge this with the Council’s Chief Executive (who may seek the views of the Independent Remuneration Panel), that/those further Allowances may be paid with the approval of the Chief Executive”.

Councillor I J Henderson opined that the procedure for determining a Councillor’s request to receive a third or subsequent Special Responsibility Allowance should be altered, because he felt this placed an undue, and potentially politically controversial, burden on the Chief Executive and he therefore suggested the following alternative:-

“...However, if they make the specific case and lodge this with the Council’s Chief Executive (who will then seek the views of the Independent Remuneration Panel) that/those further Allowances may be paid with the approval of the Full Council, who will have had regard to the views of the IRP in making its decision”.

Councillor Stock OBE and Councillor M E Stephenson both concurred with Councillor Henderson’s suggestion and agreed to incorporate it within the original motion pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.6(b) (Alteration of Motion).

Councillor Stock’s motion, as now amended, following the vote was declared **CARRIED** (Minute 77).

Currently, post May 2023, the Council would be unable to action the approval of any additional allowances, because the Chief Executive, would not have an IRP to consult with following the expiry of their term of office. Therefore, to be able to comply with Council’s intentions, if such a situation arose, an extension to the term of office for those Independent Remuneration Panel members, who expressed an interest in doing so, is necessary. The proposal is to extend for a further year without an application process, in order to allow the joint working review to be undertaken.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approves that the term of office for those Independent Remuneration Panel members, who express an interest in doing so, be extended for a further year without an application process.

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

Published Minutes of the meetings of full Council held on 22 November 2022 and 24 January 2023.