

REPORT TO: FULL COUNCIL

DATE: 23 JANUARY 2020

TITLE: REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT
REMUNERATION PANEL 2019/20

LEAD OFFICER: SIMON HILL, HEAD OF GOVERNANCE
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RECOMMENDED that:

- A** The Basic Allowance is increased to £4,575 for the 2020/21 financial year, representing a two per cent increase.
- B** All Special Responsibility Allowances in the Councillor's Allowance Scheme (attached as Appendix A to the report) are increased by two per cent for the 2020/21 financial year.
- C** The Councillor Maternity/Paternity Policy (attached as Appendix B to the report) be approved.
- D** The Head of Governance be delegated authority to make changes to the Council's Constitution to implement recommendations A, B and C.

BACKGROUND

- 1. The Council has a duty under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowance) (England) Regulations 2003 to have an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). The role of the IRP is to make recommendations as to the level of allowances and expenses for Councillors and co-optees of the Council.
- 2. The IRP has considered the following information:
 - a) comparative data on allowance scheme for other councils
 - b) written or verbal statements by the Council's two Group Leaders.
 - c) The Maternity/Paternity Policy attached as Appendix B to the report.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances

- 3. In reviewing the Council's current Scheme, the Panel noted that the previous year was the first time allowances had been increased for a number of years. It

has also noted that Council's Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) are amongst the lowest in Essex despite these increases.

4. The Panel has noted that, although allowances were increased last year, they had not been increased for a number of years prior. This meant that over the past five years, allowances had been cut in real terms.
5. The Panel considered the aspiration set out in last year's report to increase the Basic Allowance to meet the Living Wage Foundation's calculation of the Living Wage over the course of three years. Based upon working 10.5 hours per week this was calculated to be £4,917 by 2021/22. For the 2020/21 financial year, the Basic Allowance would be £4,701, representing a 4.7 per cent increase.
6. The Panel reviewed this aspiration and the comments by both Group Leaders. The Panel noted that the Council's draft budget made provision for a two per cent increase in staff pay. The Panel agreed that the same increase for Councillor Allowances was appropriate, reflecting the need to value to the role of Councillors whilst demonstrating value for money.

Councillor Maternity/Paternity Policy

7. Councillors are not considered as employees of the Council and are not covered by the Council's Maternity/Paternity Policy for employees. The Panel therefore considered the proposed Maternity/Paternity policy attached as Appendix B to the report.
8. The Policy creates a mechanism which allows temporary appointments to positions that receive a SRA. Both the original appointee and the temporary appointee then receive the SRA for a period of up to 26 weeks, although this can be extended to cover 52 weeks if appropriate.
9. The Panel noted that the proposed policy would be accommodated from within the existing budget and provided a policy which was comparable to the Council's policy for Officers. It therefore agreed to recommend the Councillor Maternity/Paternity Policy for approval.

IMPLICATIONS

Environment and Planning

None specific.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning

Finance (Includes ICT and Property and Facilities)

Should the increases set out within the report be agreed it is anticipated that these will be contained within existing and proposed budgets.

Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Deputy to the Chief Executive

Housing

As outlined in the report.

Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing

Community Wellbeing (Includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)

None specific.

Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing

Governance (Includes HR)

As set out within the report.

Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance

Appendices

Appendix A – Proposed Councillor's Allowance Scheme 2020/21

Appendix B – Councillor Maternity/Paternity Policy

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

IRP – Independent Remuneration Panel

SRA – Special Responsibility Allowance