

Subject: Independent Remuneration Panel – Review of Members’ Scheme of Allowances

Report to: Council – 22 July 2021

Report by: Corporate Services Manager

SUBJECT MATTER

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the need to convene the Independent Remuneration Panel to undertake a full review of the Great Yarmouth Borough Council Members’ Scheme of Allowances, including all Special Responsibility allowances in accordance with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) Regulations 2003.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council Members’ Scheme of Allowances had become due for review in 2020, however due to the COVID 19 pandemic the review on the allowances was put on hold. Some preliminary work was undertaken in March 2021 which allowed the panel to understand the changes that had occurred in the way Members were undertaking their roles during the pandemic.

An Independent Remuneration Panel is appointed to undertake a review and report its findings and recommendations to Full Council. The Council is required to have due regard to the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel in determining any amendments to the current Scheme.

It is intended to use the same panel as used in 2016, and more recently in the undertaking of the preliminary work on the scheme of allowances. Details of such membership will be provided to the Group Leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council :

- (1) Approve the commencement of a full review of the Members’ scheme of allowances.
- (2) Note the statutory Terms of Reference for the Independent Remuneration Panel
- (3) Agree that the Independent Remuneration Panel report its review for consideration by Council at its meeting in November 2021.
- (4) Agree to the Independent Remuneration Panel Members receiving payment of £100 per meeting.
- (5) Delegate to the Chief Executive Officer, Monitoring Officer and Corporate Services Manager following discussion with Group Leaders the appointment of the individual Members to the Independent Remuneration Panel.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require each Council to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and to undertake a review of its members' allowances scheme at least every four years.
- 1.2. The Council implemented its current Scheme in May 2016 following a review undertaken by its IRP. The regulations require each council to have regard to the recommendations of its IRP prior to amending, revoking or replacing its members' allowances scheme.
- 1.3. The 2003 Regulations require the remuneration panel to comprise at least three members, who cannot be elected councillors of any local authority, anyone who would be disqualified from being an elected member of a local authority or co-opted members of the Council's own committees.
- 1.4. It is proposed that in line with neighbouring authorities £100 per meeting is paid to the IRP Panel Members.
- 1.5. The panel will require administration, information and technical support during their review, and it is suggested that this is undertaken by the Corporate Services Manager and an Executive Support Officer with oversight from the Monitoring Officer in relation to technical questions that may arise from the review
- 1.6. In the instance an appointed panel member can no longer undertake the review, Council is asked to delegate to the Chief Executive Officer, Monitoring Officer and Corporate Services Manager following discussion with Group Leaders the appointment of the individual Members to the Independent Remuneration Panel.

2. Background

- 2.1. Some preliminary work has been undertaken by the panel, where the basic Members allowance scheme was discussed. The panel also met with a small group of Members (Cllrs Cathy Cordiner-Acenbach, Emma Flaxman-Taylor, Geoff Freeman, Adrian Myers, Steve Scott-Greenard, and Tony Wright) to look at current responsibilities.
- 2.2. Members were asked to complete a short survey which allowed the panel to look at current workload, ward duties, meeting attendance and any additional duties.
- 2.3. The Panel recognised the impact the pandemic has had on the role of Councillors and demands it had made upon them. It felt it was not possible to predict what effects this major influence would have on allowances such as the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances. The Panel therefore suggested that a full review of allowances be postponed until January 2022 to allow new ways of working to embed. However, in light of the return to face to face meetings from the 7th May 2021, Officers and Group Leaders felt it would be appropriate that a full review could now be undertaken as the Council moves back into business as usual, rather than postponing until 2022, it is suggested that the current panel now be asked to reconvene and undertake a full review of the Scheme of Allowances.

3. Terms of Reference for the Independent Remuneration Panel

The Regulations provide that the IRP can make recommendations to the Council on the following matters:

- i) The amount of Basic Allowance which should be payable equally to each elected Member.
- ii) The roles and responsibilities for which a special responsibility allowance should be payable and the amount of each such allowance.
- iii) Travelling and subsistence.
- iv) Whether an allowance in respect of expenses of arranging for the care of children and dependents should be included and, if appropriate, the amount of allowance and means by which it is determined.
- v) Co-optees allowance.
- vi) Annual adjustments of allowances.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The financial implications of the review of the Members' Scheme of Allowances will not be known until the panel's work has been completed. Council will be asked to consider any additional costs or savings as part of the report submitted by the Independent Remuneration Panel.
- 4.2 The cost of undertaking the review of the Members' scheme of allowances will be met from the Council's existing budget.

5. Risk Implications

- 5.1 When considering the findings and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, Members should evaluate them in the spirit intended and in the context of prevailing circumstances. While Members are required to have due regard to the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, it is a matter for Council to consider whether it adopts the associated recommendations in full or part.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 An Independent Remuneration Panel must be convened to undertake a review and report its findings and recommendations to Full Council. The Council is required to have due regard to the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel in determining any amendments to the current Scheme

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated against?

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Consulted
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Consulted
Existing Council Policies:	N/A
Financial Implications (including VAT and tax):	Within Report
Legal Implications (including human rights):	Within Report
Risk Implications:	Within Report