

AT A MEETING of the INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL of the County Council held at The Castle, Winchester on 23 September 2013

**PRESENT:**

Roger Farrall (Chairman), Julia Abbott; David Heck and Richard Kinch

The following officers were in attendance:

Barbara Beardwell – Head of Governance

Debbie Vaughan – Head of Democratic and Member Services

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**3. INTRODUCTION**

The Head of Governance welcomed the IRP to their annual meeting and explained the statutory framework of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 ('the Members' Allowances Regulations'), and the remit of the Independent Remuneration Panel within the Members' Allowances Regulations.

**4. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chairman reported that Members of the Panel had attended a number of meetings over the past year and spoken with Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Committees, political group Leaders, individual Councillors, the Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Resources; comparator research with other County Councils had also been undertaken. The aim of the Panel was to reach transparent recommendations which were evidence based.

The Chairman extended thanks to all Members, officers and support staff for their constructive responses to the Panel's questions and observations.

**5. COUNTY COUNCILLORS OR CO-OPTED MEMBER COMMENTS**

The Panel was advised that County Councillors and Co-opted Members had been invited to either attend or make any comments to the Panel at this meeting. As a result no comments had been received. The following County Councillors were in attendance: Ray Finch, Keith House, Chris Lagdon and Andy Moore.

## 6. **AMENDMENTS TO THE MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2013/14**

The Head of Governance advised the Panel that following the County Council's elections in May 2013 and the change of political composition, the Panel could consider if any changes were required to the current Members' Allowances Scheme for 2013/14, in accordance with Regulation 21 of the Members' Allowances Regulations.

### Special Responsibility Allowance ('SRA') for Minority Group Spokespersons:

The Panel considered the payment of SRAs to Minority Group Spokespersons in light of the change of political composition following the County Council's elections in May and the increased number of political groups on the Council. Prior to the County Council's Elections, the Liberal Democrat Group was the main opposition group and provision was included in the Members' Allowances Scheme to pay an SRA to Minority Group Spokespersons in that Group.

Following discussion the Panel concluded that a formula, similar to that applied to the payment of SRAs for Minority Group Leaders, should also be applied to the payment of SRAs to Minority Group Spokesperson. The Panel proposed that the SRA should be calculated at 20% of the SRA payable to Executive Members (currently £17,379 thus £3,476), when a Minority Group comprises of eight or more Members, plus £100 per member of the Group, and as such would apply to the Liberal Democratic Group and UK Independence Group on the County Council. The Panel also concluded that the Minority Group Spokespersons SRA paid to Members of the Liberal Democrat Group should be recalculated accordingly. Furthermore, the Panel proposed that the changes in this regard be backdated to the date Members officially took up their post, on 6 May 2013.

The Councillors in attendance were invited by the Chairman to speak; they thanked the Panel for their careful deliberations in regard to this matter and felt that the Panel's conclusion was a fair and equitable one.

Accordingly, the Independent Remuneration Panel **RECOMMEND:**

That an SRA be payable to Minority Group Spokespersons represented on those Committees of the Council in respect of which the current Liberal Democrat Minority Group Spokespersons allowances are payable, calculated at 20% of the SRA payable to Executive Members (currently £17,379 thus £3,476) when a Minority Group comprises of eight or more Members plus £100 per member of the Group, and that the change in SRA's payable in this regard be backdated to 6 May 2013. Further, that the SRA's currently payable to Liberal Democrat Minority Group Spokespersons be recalculated accordingly from the date of any amendment of the Members' Allowances Scheme by the County Council.

## 7. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2014/15

The Panel considered the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2014/15 in accordance with Regulation 21 of the Members' Allowances Regulations.

### Basic Allowance and SRAs

The Panel had previously recommended for the 2013/14 Scheme that Members should receive the same award (if any) as staff, but noted that the Council had decided to reject this recommendation and determined instead that there should be no increase in allowances for Members in 2013/14. The Panel had continued to work to the principle that, wherever possible, arrangements for Members should be harmonised with the conditions applying to Hampshire County Council employees. The Panel were therefore of the view that should a pay award be agreed nationally for staff, the basic allowance and SRAs for Members should be increased in line with that pay award from 1 April 2014.

### Special Responsibility Allowance – Chairman of the Pension Fund Panel

The Panel had been requested by the Employment in Hampshire County Council Committee to look at comparator County Councils in regard to the SRA paid to the Chairman of the Pension Fund Panel. The Panel had carried out this research and had found that the County Council's SRA stood up well against that of other County Councils.

In conclusion, the Panel recognised the diversity and complexity of the Pension Fund Panel but were of the view that there should be no increase to the SRA currently paid to the Chairman of the Pension Fund Panel.

Accordingly, the Independent Remuneration Panel **RECOMMEND** the following for the Members' Allowances Scheme 2014/15:

- (a) That the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances payable to Members be increased in line with any nationally agreed pay award for staff (if any) from 1 April 2014.
- (b) That no change be made to the existing Special Responsibility Allowance payable to the Chairman of the Pension Fund Panel.