

RAPC 498/23

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING – 6 FEBRUARY 2023

SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

Report by: Patrick Heneghan, Chair of the Informal Members' working group on members' allowance scheme, George Bisson, Chair of the Standards Committee

1 Informal Members' Working Group – review of members current allowances scheme

1.1 Members will recall that, at its meeting on 24 March 2022, the Authority resolved to adopt a Scheme of Allowances for one year with effect from 1 April 2022 and agreed that officers would work with the Chair of the Authority to set up an informal members' working group to carry out a full review of Members' allowances. The informal working group would report its findings to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee meeting on 6 February 2023, in order to facilitate that Committee's consideration of future allowances. The Resources, Audit and Performance Committee would then make a recommendation to the full Authority at its meeting on 23 March 2023 as to the adoption of a new scheme to take effect from 1 April 2023.

Officers were of the view that it would be appropriate for the Standards Committee to consider the report in the first instance and this went to a meeting of the Standards Committee on 9 January 2023.

1.2 The informal members' working group comprised Patrick Heneghan – Chair (and Chair of the RAPC), George Bisson (Chair, Standards Committee), Zoe Clewer, Victoria Mander, John Sanger and Caroline Rackham. These members met on 14 September 2022 (apology from Victoria Mander) and were supported by the Monitoring Officer, Head of Resources and Manager of Corporate Services. They discussed the number of hours worked by members per month and the basic allowance. In this regard, the group considered the report by the Authority's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) which had carried out a very comprehensive review of members' allowances in 2006 including a member questionnaire and interviews conducted with selected members.

1.3 The group noted that the IRP had reported its recommendations to the Standards Committee on 26 November 2006. The Standards Committee had subsequently reported to the Authority at its meeting on 18 January 2007 where the Panel's recommendations were adopted by the Authority in full. A copy of the Standards Committee's report to the Authority on 18 January 2007 (which includes the IRP report) is attached as **Annex 1**.

- 1.4 The working group further noted the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel in respect of a formula for arriving at a basic member allowance. The Panel's recommendation to increase the basic allowance is explained in full in paragraphs 5.1 – 5.3 of the Panel's report.
- 1.5 When the Scheme was reviewed in subsequent years, the Authority noted:
- the expense and administration involved in convening an IRP
 - the fact that the review of allowances undertaken by the IRP in 2006/7 had been thorough with sound and tested outcomes
 - there had been little change to members' roles

and accordingly agreed that, it would not be appropriate to convene another IRP. Future schemes were accordingly based on the original recommendations of the IRP. At the review of the scheme in March 2011, the Authority resolved to link future increases in the basic allowance to any NPA staff cost of living pay awards applied from April 2011 instead of the RPI (Retail Price Index).

2. Conclusions of the Working Group

- 2.1 The conclusions of the informal members' working group were that it was not necessary to appoint another IRP at this stage. The members' basic allowance, first arrived at by the IRP following a comprehensive review in November 2006 and subsequently applied to future schemes, was based on the sound and tested formula originally recommended by the IRP and should be continued. In this regard, the group noted that staff would be awarded a salary increase effective from 1 April 2022 and members' allowances would be increased in line with this award. Future increases in members' allowances should also be in line with any corresponding staff pay awards.

Staff were awarded a flat cash salary increase in November 2022 backdated to 1 April 2022 and this translated to a basic members' allowance increase of 4.04% which was also backdated accordingly.

- 2.2 Subject to any further changes the Authority may wish to make to the allowances or other aspects of the scheme, the group proposed that a new scheme be adopted from 1 April 2023 with an annual basic allowance of £2,132 pa increased for the duration of the scheme with any staff cost of living awards.
- 2.3 The informal members' working group also requested the Authority to consider the duration of the new scheme which may be up to 4 years.
- 2.4 The informal members' working group recommended that the Standards Committee be authorised to monitor any unexpected economic or political impacts which may affect the duration of the scheme and report accordingly to the Authority via the RAPC.

3. Meeting of the Standards Committee on 9 January 2023

- 3.1 At the above meeting the Committee recommended that the current basic allowance be retained and linked to increases at the lowest percentage rate of any future staff pay awards. The Committee also considered the current schedule of Special Responsibility Allowances and agreed that these payments should also remain unchanged.
- 3.2 The Committee then considered the schedule of subsistence allowances within Section 6 of the Scheme and agreed that these should be brought into line with current costs. Increases were agreed at the meeting and are set out in the below:
- Breakfast – increase £5.20 to £7.00
Lunch – increase £7.20 to £10.00
Tea – increase from £2.85 to £4.00
Dinner – increase from £9.00 to £15.00
Overnight stay – increase from £90.00 to £120.00 per night
Incidental expenses – increase from £4.20 per night, £16.80 per week to £5.00 per night, £20.00 per week
- 3.3 Members further agreed that the Chief Finance Officer be authorised to monitor subsistence allowances and make periodic adjustments to the amounts to cater for inflation increases as necessary.
- 3.4 In discussing the duration of the Scheme, the Committee considered that a period of 4 years should be applicable and supported the recommendation of the informal members' working group that the Standards Committee be authorised to monitor any unexpected economic or political impacts which may affect the duration of the Scheme and report accordingly to the Authority via the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee
- 3.5 A copy of the proposed new scheme (modelled on the current scheme with the recommendations of the Standards Committee included) is attached as **Annex 2**.

Recommendations of the Standards Committee to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee on 6 February. That:

1. the draft Scheme of Allowances as set out in Annex 2 to the report be adopted from 1 April 2023.
2. the Chief Finance Officer be authorised to monitor subsistence allowances and make periodic adjustments to the amounts to cater for inflation increases as necessary.
3. The current basic allowance of £2,132 pa be retained and linked to increases at the lowest percentage rate of any future staff pay awards
4. The duration of the Scheme, if adopted, be for a period of 4 years with the Standards Committee being authorised to monitor any unexpected economic or political impacts

which may affect the duration of the Scheme and report accordingly to the Authority via the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee

Papers:

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Cover Paper

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Annex 1 – Report of the Standards Committee to the Authority meeting on 18 January 2007 which includes the report of the Independent Review Panel dated November 2006

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Annex 2 - Proposed new scheme of allowances effective from 1 April 2023

Equality and Diversity Implications:

There are no detailed equality or diversity implications arising out of this report, however, as stated in the report, the level of any payment or allowance can affect and influence those who may apply to perform that role.

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