

Maldon District Council Members' Remuneration Panel Report

Report Date: Tuesday 27th November 2018
Report Authors: Ann Esplen, Andrew Mugford & Russell G Everard

Brief:

Review limits for Member out of pocket expenditure, travel and subsistence expenses

Panel Recommendation:

To introduce a Members' Mileage and Expenses Policy.

Rationale:

The Panel understands that there is currently no clarity or written policy regarding the type and level of subsistence which Members can claim in respect of expenses incurred in performance of their official duties. The Panel also understands that Member mileage claims are not required to specify the actual activity being undertaken by the Member to support the journey undertaken. A policy will give transparency to the type and level of expense payments funded from the public purse, and could also provide an opportunity to bring clarity to the range of activities which Members are expected to undertake in pursuance of their role.

Putting the recommendation into practice:

The Panel respectfully suggests that the new Members Mileage and Expenses Policy should use the same 'framework' as that currently in place for Officers in their Mileage and Expenses Policy. The maximum subsistence allowances should also be no better than those afforded to Officers. All travel claims should show the specific reason for the journey and the mileage of the journey undertaken. To complete the audit trail for Members claiming vehicle expenses to and from the Council Offices, the Panel suggests that committee meeting attendance registers and entries to the Member In-Out register located in the Princes Road reception area be compared with actual claims, but only on a sample basis. The policy should be subject to an annual review, as, we assume, is the current practice for the Officers' policy.

There are a number of Member allowance policy best practice models which the Panel feels worthy of mention, for example Blaby District Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council (which also lists approved duties for which travel expenses can

be claimed), and Epping Forest District Council. These policies can also be adapted to meet the District's needs.

Brief:

Review levels of remuneration to Chairs of Area Planning Committees

Recommendation:

To review the allowance currently paid to Area Committee Chairmen to 50% of the existing rate.

Rationale:

Officers provided the Panel with data sets relating to the work of the three Planning Committees. These detailed the frequencies of meetings, the number of applications being determined, and meeting duration. Four Members made representations to the Panel at informal meetings held on the 26th November 2018 at the council offices. Members made mention of the complexity of current applications and also the declining number of applications now being determined by Area Committees which they felt was as a result of the Local Plan. One Member referred to a normal committee 'workload' of some 20-30 applications in previous years, to just 10% of that figure today.

In consideration of the representations made to the Panel by Members, the actual time being spent by these committees in comparison to previous years, and the number of applications being submitted for determination, it is the view of the Panel that the current allowance should be reviewed to 50% of the existing rate. The Panel is of the opinion that the new allowance would more reflect the value of the work being undertaken by the Chairmen.

Putting the recommendation into practice:

The Panel is aware of the complexity of the planning process and the need for Members and chairman to be competent in determining planning applications. The chairman role should primarily focus on bringing structure and order to meetings. The role and duties of the chairman, in addition to their knowledge and familiarity of the applications under consideration, should not be confused with those of a general committee Member, hence the payment of an additional allowance to reflect the workload and added responsibilities of the chairman. All committee chairs and vice chairs should demonstrate competence in managing meetings. Personal development opportunities, where deemed appropriate, should be made available to all chairman and vice chairman.

General observations:

1. Considering the number of applications now being presented to the Area Committees for determination, the Panel is of the opinion that the Council should consider combining the work of three committees into one Maldon District Planning Committee which would be responsible to Full Council. This could present Members with opportunities for financial savings in terms of staffing and other practical resources.
2. The Panel is keen to encourage car sharing between Members for all official duties, as and when deemed practical, as is the current practice with Officers.

Remuneration Panel resources:

1. Members Remuneration Panel - Programme of Work 2018/19
2. Maldon DC Members Allowances April 2018
3. Panel Meeting with Members, 26th November 2018
4. Restructure of Planning Committees report, 14th September 2018
5. Area Committee numeric data on meeting duration and number of planning applications considered
6. HMRC guidance for Members' allowances
7. Council Meeting Minutes of 13th September 2018
8. Maldon DC Officers' subsistence rates
9. LGA Scheme of Members' Allowances
10. Member Allowances Schemes for Stevenage Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Epping Forest District Council, Blaby District Council, Elmbridge Borough Council, Malvern Hills District Council, and Waverley Borough Council.

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