



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES**

to
COUNCIL
15 DECEMBER 2022

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on recent review of Members' Allowances which took place on 15 August 2022 involving an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and their recommendations for Council consideration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That the Council supports the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel that Members' allowances will increase in line with average staff pay increases from 2023 as set out in section 3.6 below;
- (ii) That broadband allowance payment is withdrawn from April 2023.
- (iii) That the types of expenses that Members can claim be detailed in the new Members' Allowance Policy under 'Approved Duties' section of **APPENDIX 1**;
- (iv) That the newly drafted Members' Allowance Policy (**APPENDIX 1**) and Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental Leave and Adoption Policy (**APPENDIX 2**) are adopted.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 It is good practice every few years to review and benchmark the allowances which Members are paid and the mechanism for increasing them. The report reviewed by the IRP details the benchmarked awards paid by neighbouring Councils and presents them for review and analysis (**APPENDIX 3**).
- 3.2 Council Members were consulted with a survey in August 2022 about the proposed changes. The results of the survey were also presented to the IPR to help inform panel recommendations. **APPENDIX 4** provides the summaries results.
- 3.3 All recommendations were supported in full by the IRP. Regarding the removal of the broadband allowance, the Panel put forward that whilst they agreed that this should be removed, there should be consideration given to certain exceptions for special circumstances i.e. applications from Members experiencing financial hardship. There could be a support package in place in certain situations rather than a specific financial incentive.

- 3.4 The Panel put forward a strong message to increase diversity and this should be recognised as part of the Member budget. Particularly setting aside funding from the broadband allowance to support the maternity policy.
- 3.5 The Panel also suggested that the saving from the removal of broadband allowance could be used to provide budget for the proposed maternity / paternity / parental Policy.
- 3.6 The Panel reviewed the current proposal for staff pay award being put forward as an amount rather than percentage and recommended that the Council did not deviate where possible from the original agreement to uplift Members in line with percentage staff pay. In discussion it was suggested an average percentage across staff could be applied. Based on the current salary bill, a payment of £1,925 per employee would be an average of 5.25% and will cost £12,211.50 across all Members. This is proposed in recommendation (i).
- 3.7 In line with other Councils, the panel reviewed a draft Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental Leave and Adoption policy that may increase diversity of Members. This was considered and strongly agreed to be recommended by the Panel for adoption by the Council.
- 3.8 Additionally, the Panel reviewed the new Members' Allowance Policy and recommended this for adoption.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The recommendations supported by the IRP following their recent review of allowances are presented for Member consideration.

5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

- 5.1 Contributes to the Performance and Efficiency Corporate Goal.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Not applicable (N/A).
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – Promotes equality by ensuring that increases to pay rates for members are in line with staff as previously recommended, and access to becoming and maintaining role assisted during the time of having or adopting a child.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – The recommendations reduce risk by ensuring consistency and clear processes.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The recommendations confirm the process and ensure financial value for money and compliance.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Ensuring in line with staff policies.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – N/A.

- (vii) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** – Allowing more access to becoming a Member and creating a greater diversity in Member composition to reflect the Maldon population.

Background Papers:

- Current rates of Members' Allowances
- Neighbouring Local Authorities Benchmarking Exercise - **APPENDIX 3**
- Member Allowance Feedback Results – **APPENDIX 4**
- Essex Council policies

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