

PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

2 February 2021

Present:-

Councillors S Barker (Chair), J Hart, S Hughes, F Biederman, A Connett, R Hannaford, N Way and C Wright

Apologies:-

Councillor S Aves

* **99** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2020 be signed as a correct record.

* **100** **Items requiring urgent attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

101 **Members Allowances - Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel**

The Committee considered the Report of the Independent Members' Allowances Remuneration Panel for 2021/22. The Chair of the Panel presented their Report, highlighting specifically that the conclusions and recommendations made had been based on sound evidence, that the Panel felt it was better to raise allowances incrementally, and that they had given consideration to the issues asked of them as well as the national position with COVID-19 and the impact on communities as well as the operations and finances of the Council.

Members welcomed the Panel's acknowledgment in the Report that while historically there had been little scope for improvement, the structure of the County Council's scheme remained fit for purpose with sound principles and noted that, in commending its Report to the Council, the Panel had not suggested any significant changes to the structure of the Council's scheme.

The Panel had recommended no uplift to Members allowances, but wished to place on record their appreciation to Councillors for their Leadership throughout the pandemic, noting that Members had worked tirelessly in their communities and also adapted to remote working practices to ensure democratic processes continued.

The recommended allowances from May 2021 (based on a freeze) were set out in Appendix 1 of its Report.

The Committee placed on record its thanks to the Panel for their comprehensive Report.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Connett, **SECONDED** by Councillor Hart, and

RESOLVED

(a) that the Report of the Independent Panel be welcomed and its Members be thanked for their work;

(b) that the Committee notes the Report's conclusions and asks the County Council to accept the recommendations outlined below.

- (a) The basic structure of the current scheme is endorsed and retained;
- (b) The Panel feels it important not to depart from the panel's established formula of calculating the basic allowance and also notes the uncertainty of the staff pay award for 2021/2022. In that vein and recognising the likely pay freeze (although subject to consideration by Local Government Employers) for those earning in excess of £24,000 and the base line figure of £27,456 used for calculating the basic allowance (median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in Devon), the Panel recommend that allowances be frozen for 2021/2022 (See Appendix 1 for the current rates recommended to be carried through to 2021/2022);
- (c) that the overnight rate for London be increased to £153.00, in line with the rates calculated by Price Waterhouse Cooper for the average daily rate (ADR) for London.
- (d) Careful consideration should be given, in the future, to the levels of allowances to ensure they keep pace with the economy generally;
- (e) The sustained reduction in the number of SRA's be welcomed and that the levels be kept below the 50% threshold, as is currently the case;
- (f) That the Panel reiterate their desire that Group Leaders take a robust approach to the performance management of their Members and places on record their thanks for the levels of reassurance provided by Group Leaders for dealing with performance issues; and

- (g) Notwithstanding the recommendations of the Panel for an allowances freeze, the Panel wish to place on record their appreciation to Councillors for their Leadership throughout the pandemic, noting that Members had worked tirelessly in their communities and also adapted to remote working practices to ensure democratic processes continued.

102 Proposed Amendments to the Constitution - Financial Regulations

The Committee considered the Report of the County Treasurer (CT/21/15) relating to proposed changes to the Constitution (Part 5c - Financial Regulations).

The Report outlined the proposed changes, relating to Financial Regulations, which were in need of updating and highlighted the detail in the attached appendix to the Report.

The changes were as follows:

- Gifts & Hospitality (C12) – the Council’s policy contained an anomaly, therefore needed to be corrected by removing an entry relating to legacies.
- New Item: Guarantees (C18) – in some exceptional circumstances the County Council was asked to act as guarantor for third parties. It was proposed that a new section be added to cover these arrangements and the agreement processes.
- Income (D10): Scales of Fees & Charges – this section currently set out the need for regular review of scales of fees & charges and variations. This had been expanded to provide specific reference to ‘new fees and charges’; and
- Income (D10): Detailed Standards – this section had been expanded to provide further clarity on the existing requirement for prompt rendering of accounts and prompt account recovery and the agreement processes.

Members asked questions on the approval process for both existing and new fees and charges.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hart, **SECONDED** by Councillor Hannaford, and

RESOLVED that the proposed changes to the Constitution, as outlined in the report and appendix, of sections C12, C18 and D10 be recommended for approval by the Council, subject to the additional words at D10.3 ‘**via a delegated decision**’ at the end of the sentence.

NOTES:

1. *Minutes should always be read in association with any Reports for a complete record.*
2. *If the meeting has been webcast, it will be available to view on the [webcasting site](#) for up to 12 months from the date of the meeting*

DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT

The Meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 10.52 am