

Central Bedfordshire Council

Council

17 November 2016

Independent Remuneration Panel

Report of Cllr Richard Wenham, Executive Member for Corporate Services
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This report does not relate to a key decision

Purpose of this report

This report sets out the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) relating to the Scheme of Allowances for Members, proposes re-appointing two existing IRP members, suggests a term of office for the Panel vacancy, proposes increasing the Panel membership from four to five and updates the procedure for filling vacancies on the IRP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Council is asked to:

1. approve the Scheme of Members' Allowances for Central Bedfordshire as recommended by the IRP at Appendix A for a period up to 12 months in accordance with the recommendations of its IRP and to amend Part K of the Council's Constitution accordingly
2. re-appoint Mr Geoff Lambert and Mr Chris Bell to the IRP for the periods to 31 March 2021 and 31 March 2022 respectively and to approve the term of office for the Panel vacancy to 31 March 2020
3. increase the size of the size of the Panel membership from four to five members, the period of the new appointment being until 31 March 2021
4. amend the delegated authority relating to the appointment process to fill vacancies on the Panel from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to the Head of Governance

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. These matters were not referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the matter is a function of Council.

Legal Background

2. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require that a local authority may not adopt or amend a Scheme of Members' Allowances without first having regard to recommendations made to it by an Independent Remuneration Panel.
3. The Regulations also require that each local authority must establish an independent remuneration panel consisting of at least three members who must not be a member of a committee or sub-committee of the authority or disqualified from being a member of an authority.
4. Statutory Guidance on the 2003 Regulations stipulate that

“The local authority will need to consider the term of office of members of the panel.... The panel may become more effective as its knowledge and understanding of members' allowances is increased.....Accordingly, local authorities may wish to consider appointing members of the panel for a term of office of several years, perhaps 3-5 years. Local authorities may also wish to consider phasing appointments to ensure that there is always one member of the panel who has some experience.....This could be achieved by differing lengths of appointment”

and that

“A local authority will need to consider the appropriate size for its Panel to discharge its functions effectively given the particular local circumstances. Councils should avoid unduly large Panels which would be unable to be an effective and publicly accountable source of clear recommendations”.

Report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel

5. The Panel met on 26 October 2016 to carry out a review of the current Scheme of Allowances for Members which was last reviewed in November 2011. A note of the IRP's meeting is attached as Appendix B.
6. The Panel recommended ratification of the current scheme and agreed to meet within the next 12 months to examine whether allowances should be subject to some form of indexation.

Panel Membership

7. Due to a recent resignation the present Panel membership arrangements are as follows:

Name of Member	Period of Appointment
Mr G Lambert	Expires 31 March 2017
Mr C Bell	Expires 31 March 2018
Dr Roy Tipping	Expires 31 March 2019
Vacancy	Expired – Council to approve

Mr Lambert and Mr Bell have both served on the Panel for a number of years and have expressed a wish to extend their membership period. It is proposed that the period of appointment for the vacancy be to 31 March 2020.

8. The Panel has made a recommendation to increase its size from 4 to 5 members as it believes that an additional member will assist the Panel with succession planning and continuity and to combat instances where Panel members are unavailable. The request complies with the statutory Guidance in paragraph 4 above. The quorum would remain at 3 as agreed by Council on 24 November 2011. If the recommendation for an additional member is approved, it is proposed that the appointment be for the period expiring 31 March 2021.
9. Should Council support the recommendation, there would be a financial implication as Panel Members receive an allowance for each meeting attended which is at the same level as allowances paid to co-opted members. However, it is anticipated that this can be met from existing budget provision.
10. There would no cost attached to the recruitment process as it would be undertaken at the same time as filling the vacancy referred to in paragraph 5 above.

Appointment Process for filling IRP vacancies

11. Under current arrangements which were approved by Council on 13 September 2012, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services has delegated authority on specific matters relating to filling vacancies on the Panel. As a result of changes to the Council's Management structure since then, it is now appropriate for this delegated authority to pass to the Head of Governance.

Council Priorities

12. The effectiveness of an Independent Remuneration Panel contributes to the Council priorities 'creating stronger communities' and 'a more efficient and responsive Council'.

Legal Implications

13. The Council is required to establish and maintain an IRP under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003

Financial and Risk Implications

14. Members of the Panel receive an allowance for each meeting attended which is at the same level as allowances paid to co-opted members. The allowances are currently £75 where a meeting lasts up to 4 hours and £150 where it is over 4 hours. Historically the Panel has never met on more than 3 occasions in a financial year.
15. There would also be a cost of approximately £2,500 as a result of the recruitment process to fill the IRP vacancy referred to in paragraph 5.
16. These costs will be absorbed within the total Members Allowances Budget for the current year.

Equalities Implications

17. An Independent Remuneration Panel is necessary in relation to the provision of a fair scheme of Members' Allowances which is essential to the democratic process in ensuring an equal opportunity to all to become a Councillor.
18. The Scheme of Members' Allowances includes allowances for Dependants' Carers' to provide equality for any Member with caring responsibilities.

Appendices

Appendix A: Existing scheme of Members allowances (Schedule K of the Constitution)

Appendix B: Note of the IRP meeting held on 26 October 2016.

Background Papers

19. The following background papers, not previously available to the public, were taken into account and are available on the Council's website:

Previous full report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Minute 60 refers)

<http://centralbeds.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=576&Mid=3697>