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**Meeting:** Council

**Date:** 13 September 2012

**Subject:** Independent Remuneration Panel

**Report of:** Cllr Maurice Jones, Executive Member for Corporate Resources

**Summary:** This report sets out recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for the Members' Allowances, following its meeting on 14 August, 2012 and recommends a revised appointment process to fill vacancies on the Panel.

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Contact Officer: John Atkinson, Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

The provision of a fair scheme of Members' Allowances is essential to the democratic process in ensuring an equal opportunity to all to become a Councillor.

### **Financial:**

1. There will be a cost of approximately £2,500 as a result of the recruitment process to fill the IRP vacancy referred to in paragraph 4 which will be absorbed within the total Members Allowances Budget for 2012/13.

### **Legal:**

2. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and Statutory Guidance 2006.

### **Risk Management:**

3. None.

### **Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

4. None.

### **Equalities/Human Rights:**

5. None.

### **Public Health:**

6. None.

**Community Safety:**

7. None.

**Sustainability:**

8. None.

**Procurement:**

9. None.

**RECOMMENDATION:****Council is asked to:**

- 1. endorses the recommendation of the Panel in respect of the two posts of Executive Member for External Affairs and the Executive Member for Economic Partnerships;**
- 2. reappoints Mr Geoff Lambert to the Panel for the period to 31 March 2017;**
- 3. approve the revised appointment process to fill vacancies on the Panel as set out in Paragraph 5.**

10. On 24 November 2011, Council approved a recommendation of the IRP that the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) paid to the Executive Member for External Affairs and the Executive Member for Partnerships be reviewed by 31 August 2012. The Independent Remuneration Panel met on 14 August, 2012 to conduct this review and recommends to Council that the SRAs paid to the posts of Executive Member for External Affairs and Executive Member for Economic Partnerships be £10,654.72 per annum, the SRA approved by Council at Minute C/11/60 (1). A copy of the full report of the Panel is attached as Appendix A.
11. The Panel asked the Council to consider ways in which the Executive Members for External Affairs and Partnerships could report to the Council, and hence into the public domain, on the work that they have undertaken. In fact, a process already exists by which all Executive Members make periodic reports to the Council and so there is no need for the Council to make any specific decision on this aspect of the Panel's recommendations.
12. In addition the Panel noted that Mr Geoff Lambert's term of office is due to expire on 31 March 2013 and he confirmed that he would be willing to serve on the Panel for a further four years. Mr Lambert has considerable experience and knowledge of the Council and its Members Allowance Scheme, and his reappointment would provide support and stability to the Panel.
13. The Panel therefore recommends to Council that Mr Geoff Lambert be reappointed to the Panel for the period to 31 March 2017.

## **Appointment Process**

14. After agreeing to increase the Panel from three to four members on 24 November 2011 Council approved that:
  - (a) the process for advertising and interviewing vacancies on the Panel be delegated to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services;
  - (b) an Interview Panel be appointed comprising the Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel, the Chairman of the Standards Committee and an officer nominated by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services with the remit to shortlist candidates, to undertake interviews and to submit a recommendation to Council from suitable applicants who either live or work in the Council's area.
15. Since then a vacancy has arisen on the Panel following the resignation of Mrs Brigid Heley who is leaving the area. The Interview Panel arrangement in 14(b) above is no longer appropriate following the abolition of the Standards Committee.
16. It is proposed that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to replace the Chairman of the Standards Committee on the IRP Interview Panel by one of the two members of the Joint Panel of Independent Persons living in the Central Bedfordshire area appointed under the Localism Act 2011 (see earlier agenda item).

**Appendices:** Appendix A – Report of Independent Remuneration Panel

**Background Papers:** (open to public inspection) None

**Location of papers:** Not applicable

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

### Notes of a Meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel held on 14 August 2012

#### Present

**Panel Members:** Chris Bell, Mrs Brigid Heley, Geoff Lambert and Dr Roy Tipping

**Officers:** Norman Eighteen and Alan Millbery (note taker)

#### REVIEW OF SRAs FOR TWO POSTS OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO

1. The Panel was reminded that the review arose from the Council approving the Panel's recommendation last year that the SRAs for these new posts should be reviewed by no later than 31 August 2012. The Panel considered a range of documents that had been circulated in advance of the meeting which included those relating to the Panel's deliberations in 2011, information from 2012 on the roles of Executive Members for Economic Partnerships and for External Affairs and details of the SRAs currently paid to Members.
2. The Chairman of the Panel outlined that the purpose of the meeting was to examine the evidence from the documents circulated, to take account of the verbal evidence given by those attending the meeting, to ascertain how the roles have developed since they were introduced and to form a view on the level of SRA for these two posts.
3. Both Councillor Jamieson, Leader of the Council, and Councillor Stay, Executive Member for External Affairs attended the meeting separately to present evidence to and answer questions from the Panel. (An invitation was also extended to Councillor Mrs Turner, Executive Member for Economic Partnerships, but she was unable to attend due to personal circumstances).
4. Councillor Jamieson reminded the Panel of the new Executive model he had introduced in 2011 and that the portfolios allowed the use of expertise offered by working Members in a focused way, in specific areas, for the benefit of the Council. He felt that this approach had delivered significant improvements. Regarding the two posts under review, he considered these were key roles in the changing environment faced by the Council as they addressed areas outside the main Executive Portfolios and freed up time for him and other Executive Members to apply greater focus on their key strategic responsibilities. There had been significant changes to the roles over the last 12 months or so and this reflected the continuing changing role of local authorities.
5. In response to a question from a Panel member about the need for evidence of responsibility, as opposed to time commitment, in order to recommend an appropriate level of SRA, Councillor Jamieson explained that the role of Executive Member for Economic Partnerships was made up of a number of key responsibility duties, principally through being a lead member and chairing several local and regional strategic bodies.

In addition the present postholder was the former Leader of the Council and she had continued in some positions which she had previously held as Leader.

6. Councillor Jamieson saw the role of Executive Member for External Affairs as being quite different in its style and focus but equal in its responsibility level. It was outward facing and was key in raising the profile and influence of the Council, by lobbying and by engaging with key Government contacts in particular, thereby enabling the Council to have a significant role in helping to develop future policy in such areas as metal theft, to utilise 'place shaping' funds and to influence other areas such as housing strategy and other requirements of the Localism Act. The cross cutting activities undertaken in this role also allowed other Portfolio Holders to focus on the priorities of their services. In this respect much of the work of this Executive Member is reported back to the Council through those Portfolio Holders.
7. Councillor Stay indicated that when the role was established it was new for the Council but it had been one that was now being replicated across other local authorities. It was necessary for the Council to have an outward looking focus because of the significant change in relationships between local and central government which saw more responsibilities being devolved to local councils during a period of reducing resources. His role involved much lobbying, persuading and influencing to secure a better deal for Central Bedfordshire Council as it competes with larger neighbouring authorities for scarce resources. There was a need to raise the profile and reputation of the Council as a relatively new authority and he felt that this was being achieved. He quoted an example of him using his influence to help bring about real change by successfully lobbying for new metal theft legislation which has resulted in a Private Members' Bill currently going through Parliament.
8. In response to questions from a Panel Member about the difficulties for the Panel in defining the responsibilities of the role, Councillor Stay explained his views on the responsibilities of being an Executive Member with full voting rights and referenced it against particular Chairmen posts. He also pointed out the other main element of his portfolio involved attending external meetings, briefings and discussions with regional and Government bodies as well as MPs and Ministers. These were often not in the public domain and so his activities and responsibilities could not be easily evidenced in the same way as those of other Portfolio Holders. He explained that the Council had benefited from direct investment through his position on Improvement East and the cumulative effect of lobbying, influencing and communicating at a political level was to obtain a better deal for the Council.

## **Deliberations**

9. When the Panel recommended different amounts for the SRAs last year it was on the basis that there was clear evidence of the role and responsibilities of the post of Executive Member for Economic Partnerships which the Panel felt had not been the case with the post of Executive Member for External Affairs which was at the time a new and untried emerging role.

10. The Panel considered all the documentation and also the submissions of Councillors Jamieson and Stay. In the case of the Executive Member for Economic Partnerships the Panel's view was that the responsibilities had not increased. The Panel was satisfied with the way that outcomes were being reported back to the Executive and Council and hence into the public domain. Therefore, the Panel considered the current level of SRA for the post to be appropriate.
11. In relation to the post of Executive Member for External Affairs, the Panel was satisfied that there was now clear evidence of significant responsibility attached to the post and concluded that the portfolio, through the lengthy local government experience of the portfolio holder, performed an important role and added considerable value to the Council. The Panel also acknowledged that, because of the very nature of the role, the responsibilities had been difficult to quantify and capture. These type of roles exist in other institutions such as charities where lobbying for change and support produced similar outcomes which were the specific aims of the role. However, the Panel had a concern that there has been an issue over negative public perception for the post and it feels that the Council needs to consider how to better report this influential external role.
12. In judging the worth of these two Executive Member posts, the Panel considered that, despite the portfolios being very different in their range of duties, the responsibility levels were now similar and that it was not possible to make a distinction between the two posts in the allowances scheme.

### **Recommendations**

13. (a) That the SRAs for the posts of Executive Member for Economic Partnerships and Executive Member for External Affairs be £10,654.72 per annum (the amount approved by Council on 24 November 2011 (Minute C/11/60(1) refers);  
  
(b) That the Council consider ways of reporting to Council and hence into the public domain, the outcomes of work undertaken by these two Executive Members.

### **MEMBERSHIP OF PANEL**

14. The Panel noted that Mr Geoff Lambert's term of office is due to expire on 31 March 2013 and he confirmed that he would be willing to serve on the Panel for a further four years. Mr Lambert has considerable experience and knowledge of the Council and its Members Allowance Scheme, and his reappointment would provide support and stability to the Panel.

### **Recommendation**

15. That Mr Geoff Lambert be reappointed to the Panel for the period to 31 March 2017.