

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Employment in Hampshire County Council
Date:	12 November 2013
Title:	Amendment to Members' Allowances Scheme 2013/14 and Members' Allowances Scheme 2014/15
Reference:	5313
Report From:	Director of Corporate Services – Policy and Governance

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The legislative framework governing the payment of Members Allowances is set out in the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 ('the Members Allowances Regulations').
- 1.2. Under the provisions of the Members Allowances Regulations, the County Council is required each year to make a Members' Allowances Scheme. The Members' Allowances Scheme needs to make provision for payment of Basic Allowances, Special Responsibility Allowances ("SRA's") Dependents' Carers' Allowances, Travelling and Subsistence Allowances, and Co-optees Allowances. The Members' Allowances Scheme also includes provisions in respect of eligibility for Members' Pensions. Once a Members' Allowance Scheme is made for any year it may be amended during the year in question in accordance with the Members' Allowances Regulations. It is also possible under the Members' Allowances Regulations for any amendment to the Members' Allowances Scheme to be backdated to the beginning of the financial year in which any such amendment is made.
- 1.3. By virtue of the Members' Allowances Regulations, before the County Council can make or amend a Members' Allowances Scheme, it is required to have regard to recommendations made in relation to it by an Independent Remuneration Panel ("IRP"). In this regard the IRP met on 23 September 2013. Minutes of the IRP meeting, and the recommendations of the IRP are attached at Annex 1 to this report.

2. Contextual information

2.1. Amendment to Members' Allowances Scheme 2013/14

Consideration of amendment to the Members' Allowances Scheme 2013/14 is required in consequence of the revised political make up of the County Council, following the County Council elections in May 2013.

2.1.1 Recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel

- (a) That an SRA be payable to Minority Group Spokespersons represented on those Committees of the Council in respect of which the current Liberal Democrat Minority Group Spokespersons allowances are payable, calculated at 20% of the SRA payable to Executive Members (currently £17,379 thus £3,476), when a Minority Group comprises of eight or more Members plus £100 per member of the Group, and that the change in SRA's payable in this regard be backdated to 6 May 2013. Further, that the SRA's currently payable to Liberal Democrat Minority Group Spokespersons be recalculated accordingly from the date of any amendment of the Members' Allowances Scheme by the County Council.**

SRA's for Minority Political Group Spokespersons (at the time Liberal Democrat and Labour) were determined by the County Council in 2002. In 2002 the Liberal Democrat Group comprised 19 members, and the Labour Group nine members. The amount payable was a standard allowance of £5,000 per annum for Liberal Democrat Group Spokespersons and £2,500 per annum for Labour Group Spokespersons. Following the County Council elections in 2009 Labour ceased to be represented as a political group on the County Council, and therefore SRA's in respect of Minority Spokespersons for this group ceased to be payable.

The IRP indicated that they supported the principle of an SRA for Minority Political Group Spokespersons represented on the County Council, subject to a minority group comprising a minimum number of eight or more members. Recognising that the composition of political groups represented on the County Council might change from time to time, and that there might be other minority groups in the future, the IRP were of the view that SRA's for Minority Group Spokespersons should be calculated by means of a formula, in the same way SRA's for Minority Group Leaders are calculated by reference to a formula. In this way the amount of any SRA's payable could be readily adjusted in the future in the event of any change in the political make up of the County Council. The IRP considered that an appropriate amount of an SRA for minority group spokespersons was 20% of the SRA payable to Executive Members, plus £100 per member of the Minority Political Group in question, and that any change be backdated to 6 May 2013, being the date members of the new County Council took up office.

Should the recommendation of the IRP be accepted this would mean that an SRA was payable in respect of forty five posts on the County Council. Members will be aware that currently the County Council has adopted a '50% rule', whereby SRA's are restricted to no more than 50% of members of the County Council. This is however a self imposed rule not a legal

rule, although Statutory Guidance does advise that Local Authorities should give careful consideration in terms of responsibility and real time commitment as to how many posts on the Council should attract an SRA. At the time the 50% rule was adopted there were three political groups represented on the County Council. Following the 2013 elections there are now five political groups, with minority political groups representing a substantial part of the County Council's electorate. There is no legal reason why the 50% rule could not be modified to take account of the new make up of the County Council and the consequential responsibilities and real time commitments of spokespersons of minority political groups now represented on the County Council, should the County Council consider it appropriate to do so.

2.2 **Members Allowances Scheme 2014/15**

2.2.1 **Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel**

- (a) That the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances payable to Members be increased in line with any nationally agreed pay award for staff (if any) from 1 April 2014.**

Members will recall that, notwithstanding the recommendation of the IRP on the Members' Allowances Scheme 2013/14 that allowances for Members should be increased with any pay award for staff, the County Council determined at its meeting in February 2013 that basic allowances and SRA's for Members should be frozen at existing rates from 1 April 2013. Whilst noting the decision of the County Council to continue to freeze Members' Allowances for 2013/14, the IRP were of the view that for 2014/15 allowances for Members should be increased in line with any nationally agreed pay award for staff (if any) from 1 April 2014.

- (b) That no change be made to the existing Special Responsibility Allowance payable to the Chairman of the Pension Fund Panel.**

The amount of the SRA payable to the Chairman of the Pension Fund Panel was last considered by the EHCC Committee at its meeting on 31 October 2012. The view of the EHCC Committee was that due to the nature and increasing complexity of the role when combined with the overall decision making authority of the Panel, the role of the Chairman of the Pension Panel carried more responsibility than that reflected in the current SRA. Whilst accepting the recommendation of the IRP that there should be no change in the amount of SRA in respect of the post of Chairman of the Pension Fund Panel payable, the EHCC Committee asked that the IRP consider this further for 2014/15, and in particular look at comparator County Councils and the SRA payable by other Councils for this or a similar position.

The IRP reported at its meeting on 19 September 2013 that they had carried out their research in this regard, and that the view of the IRP was that the SRA currently payable to the Chairman of the Pension Fund Panel was in line with SRA's payable in comparator authorities, and therefore there should be no change in the amount payable.

3. Information

- 3.1. Amendments to the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2013/14, and the Members' Allowances Scheme 2014/15, will be considered by the County Council at its meeting on 20 February 2014.

4. Recommendation

That the Employment in Hampshire County Council Committee ('the EHCC') recommend to the County Council that approval be given to amendment to the existing Members Allowances Scheme for 2013/14, and a Members' Allowances Scheme 2014-2015, which takes into account the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, and the views of the EHCC.