



GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MEETING : Tuesday, 14th March 2017

PRESENT : Cllrs. Morgan (Chair), H. Norman (Vice-Chair), Haigh, Hilton, Hanman, Taylor and Coole

Others in Attendance

Jon McGinty, Managing Director

Anthony Wilson, Head of Planning

Tanya Davies, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Peter Jones, Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel

Parvati Diyar, Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES : None

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair declared a personal interest in Item 28, a report of the Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel concerning the review of Members' Allowances 2017, as it included proposals for a Special Responsibility Allowance for his role. He advised that he would leave the meeting during discussion of that part of the report and return to take part in the debate on the other elements of the report.

25. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

26. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no questions from members of the public.

27. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions or deputations.

28. REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2017

The Committee received the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) with regard to the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme and to seek a decision on an appropriate scheme for the payment of allowances in 2017-18.

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The Chair welcomed Peter Jones, Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel, and thanked him for attending the meeting.

The Chair withdrew himself from the meeting and took no further part in the debate.

The meeting was chaired by the Vice Chair for this part of the discussion.

The Chair of the Remuneration Panel referred to the three recommendations as detailed in the report. He advised the Committee that the report on the minor review had been prepared by the Council's IRP Panel which consisted of three members and thanked his colleagues for their involvement. All views expressed by the Panel had been unanimous.

The Chair of the Remuneration Panel thanked the Chair of General Purposes Committee for meeting with them. He also thanked the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager for the excellent work she had undertaken and for being extremely helpful.

In response to a question from Councillor Hilton, the Chair of the Remuneration Panel confirmed that the Panel had only been asked to review the allowance for the Chair of General Purposes Committee.

The Chair of the Remuneration Panel added that one Member had requested that the allowance for a particular Committee Chair should be increased. The Panel considered that changes to existing Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) should not be considered in isolation and that, as the role was already in receipt of an SRA, a minor review was not the appropriate time to consider any further changes.

Councillor Hilton suggested that one area which could be looked at was the allowance for the Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as the post worked closely with the Chair. Councillor Hilton requested the Panel to consider this allowance at a future review.

Councillor Coole commented that he had submitted a suggestion which also requested the allowance for the Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be increased. He was advised that this would be looked at as part of a full review of Members' Allowances.

The Committee were advised that the next full review would be undertaken in 2019.

The Committee had no further comments to make and agreed to recommend that a Special Responsibility Allowance be introduced for the Chair of General Purposes Committee from 1 April 2017.

The Chair returned to the meeting.

The Chair referred to paragraph 3.15 of the report referring to travel arrangements for Members. He questioned how a decision would be made if there was to be a disagreement over the suggested form of transport. He suggested this should be made clear from the start.

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Councillor Haigh raised concerns that the Policy did not take into account the needs of Members and queried what would happen if a Member was offered a form of transport but chose not to use it. Councillor Haigh was advised by the Managing Director that the view taken by Cabinet was that Members should adhere to the same rules applied to Officers.

The Vice Chair advised that the Democratic Services team currently organised travel arrangements for Members. Councillor Haigh said it would not be appropriate for any Officers to make a decision on Members' travel arrangements.

Councillor Hilton commented that the Policy would require clarification as to how a decision would be made. He added that on occasions he would prefer to use his own vehicle to attend meetings and for long distance journeys he would prefer to use public transport. He suggested further analysis of the Policy would be required.

The Managing Director advised the Committee that Cabinet Members had recommended that the Policy to be applied to Members. Officers and Members would be required to provide information on their business journeys through a sophisticated online portal which would calculate the most cost effective and environmentally sustainable method of transport.

Councillor Haigh commented that Members were not employees of the Council and should therefore not be on the same terms as staff. She added that Members should be able to choose their method of travel. She said some Members would not choose the use of a hire car as they would not feel comfortable using the form of transport allocated to them.

Councillor Haigh suggested that Group Leaders should have the final decision to approve Members' travel arrangements.

Councillor Taylor considered that staff and Members should be reimbursed for the cheapest form of travel even if they chose to travel by a different method.

The Managing Director advised that travel costs would only be reimbursed if the Policy was adhered to; to reimburse for the cheapest form of travel was not considered to be enough of an incentive. The Committee were advised that a review would be undertaken on the effectiveness of the Policy after 12 months of operation.

Councillor Haigh proposed that Members use the portal on the basis that they would be able to refuse the method of transport offered if they were unhappy with it. She suggested this should be offered to Members on a voluntary basis and the Policy should recognise that Members conduct their business in a different manner to Officers.

In response to a query from the Vice Chair, the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager confirmed that the current mileage rate for the use of a private motor vehicle was 50p per mile.

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Councillor Hanman referred to the electric cars. The Managing Director confirmed that the Council would be moving towards having a pool of modern and environmentally friendly fleet vehicles.

The Committee were advised that the Members' Allowances report would be presented to Council on 23 March 2017.

The Chair of the Remuneration Panel advised that it was desirable for Members to adhere to the same Policy as staff. He added that the Panel would be prepared to review the operation of the Policy at an appropriate time.

The Chair commented that, as there would be a limited number of Members affected by this, the Policy should be reviewed in six months which would meet the concerns expressed by the Committee.

Councillor Haigh moved an amendment that the Green Travel Policy be offered to Members on an optional basis and the effectiveness of the Policy be reviewed after 12 months of operation.

The Chair put the amendment to the vote, which was carried.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager confirmed that the Committee's recommendation would go forward to Council along with the Panel's own recommendation.

General Purposes Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** to Council that:

- (1) A Special Responsibility Allowance of 0.3 x the Basic Allowance be introduced for the Chair of General Purposes Committee with effect from 1 April 2017.
- (2) That the Council's Green Travel Policy be offered to Members on an optional basis and the effectiveness of the Policy be reviewed after 12 months of operation.
- (3) The Scheme of Members' Allowances set out in Appendix 1 be approved for 2017-18, subject to the amendment proposed at recommendation (2).

29. CHANGES TO CONSTITUTION - SCHEME OF DELEGATION RELATING TO PLANNING APPLICATIONS (FURTHER AMENDMENT)

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning which proposed a further amendment relating to the Council's scheme of delegation on planning matters in relation to applications received from Members and Council officers or their immediate relatives.

Councillor Haigh explained that she had submitted a Motion at Council on 1 December 2016 regarding the existing delegation arrangements. The proposed amendment would provide a clear and unambiguous process that would maintain transparency in decision making. She referred to the significant risks which would

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be involved if the wording had not been amended. Careful consideration would need to be taken when referring to immediate family.

The Committee discussed the wording and agreed that the proposed amendment should refer to immediate family which would include parents, children and siblings (not cousins).

General Purposes Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** to Council that:

- (1) The suggested changes to the Constitution set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report be approved.

30. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 18 July 2017 at 6.00pm

Time of commencement: 06:00 hours
Time of conclusion: 06:50 hours

Chair