

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, BOOTLE ON MONDAY 21ST JANUARY, 2013

PRESENT: Canon Roger Driver (in the Chair)
Mr. E. Davies, Mr. J. Fraser and Mrs. S. Lowe

ALSO PRESENT: Andrea Watts, Head of Governance and Civic Services and Paul Fraser, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

16. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

17. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME - POSSIBLE ANNUAL INFLATIONARY INDICES

Further to Minute No. 13(3) of the meeting held on 10 October 2012, the Panel considered the report of the Head of Finance and ICT that provided information on relevant inflationary measures (indices) that could be used to amend the Members/ Allowances Scheme (the Scheme) and that would aid the Panel in its formulation of its recommendations to the Council on the Scheme for 2013/14.

The report indicated that the indices identified fell, principally, into two categories; employee benefits and general inflation indices; that each had their own benefits and pitfalls; that employee benefits reflected the increases in remuneration that certain sectors (or all parts) of the economy were receiving, whilst general inflation provided an indication of the price increases affecting the wider economy; and provided details of the employee benefits relating to the Local Government Pay Settlement, average pay increase given to Sefton Council employees, national pay scales and minimum wage increases and general inflation indices relating to the retail price index and the consumer price index.

The report concluded that each increase of 1% in Members' Allowances would result in an additional cost of £8,051 for the Council; and detailed the mechanism used by Sefton's neighbours when increasing their

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members' allowances, namely, Knowsley, St. Helens and Halton indexed to the national pay awards for Local Government Officers whilst Liverpool and Wirral had no index linking.

Annex A to the report provided financial details of increases in the Scheme using the potential indices referred to above.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Panel recommends, having taken into account Sefton's current economic circumstances and acknowledging the fact that Council staff have not received a pay increase for three years, the Council to link increases in Members Allowances to the average pay increase given to Sefton Council employees;
- (2) the annual adjustment in Members' Allowances be implemented for a period of four years in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 Part 3 Sections (4) and (5);
- (3) it be acknowledged that the Panel may need to meet to review the Members' Allowances structure (as approved by Council on 5 July 2012) if the political balance on the Authority changes; and
- (4) a meeting of the Panel be held at 2.00 p.m. on Monday, 14 October 2013 to:
 - (i) receive a presentation from the Head of Corporate Finance and ICT Strategy on the Council's current financial position; and
 - (ii) review the dependent's carers' allowance and to aid the Panel in its deliberations on this matter, the Head of Governance and Civic Services be requested to obtain data from other local authorities on their schemes.

18. MEMBER RESPONSES RELATING TO THE MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME

At its meeting held on 10 October, the Panel considered the principle of index linking increases in Members' Basic Allowances (BA) and resolved, amongst other things, that all Members of the Council be invited to submit their written comments to the Head of Governance and Civic Services on the level of the Basic Allowance and the relativity of the Bands relating to Special Responsibility Allowances; and that all written submissions made by Members be reported to the Panel.

In accordance with the decision of the Panel of 10 October the responses received from 8 Members of the Council were considered by the Panel.

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RESOLVED: That

- (1) with regard to the comments made on the relationship between the Special Responsibility Allowances paid to the Chairs of the Planning and Licensing and Regulatory Committees and the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committees the Council is reminded that the Panel offered the current scheme to the Council with the intention that the Council should have the flexibility to appoint Councillors to such of the Bands as the Council considers appropriate for their duties;
- (2) with regard to the comments made regarding the Mayoral Allowance, Regulations stipulate that all Members of the Authority should receive a Basic Allowance. Accordingly, it would not be possible to withdraw the Basic Allowance from the Mayor; and
- (3) the Head of Governance and Civic Services be requested, on behalf of the Panel, to contact the 8 Members who submitted views on the Members' Allowance Scheme to thank them for their input into the process.