

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report To:</b>	Council
<b>Date:</b>	28 March 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Members Allowance Scheme - Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel</b>
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Alexander Polak, Head of Governance and Scrutiny
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Exempt:</b>	NO
<b>Appendices:</b>	A - Report by the Independent Remuneration Panel (TO FOLLOW)

### **1. Summary and Recommendations**

- 1.1 An Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) convened in March 2023 has made a report and series of recommendations relating to updating the Members Allowance Scheme. These are set out in appendix A.

#### **Recommendations:**

Council is requested to:

- (a) Endorse the Independent Remuneration Panel appointments made under existing delegated authority by the Monitoring Officer on 7 March 2023;
- (b) consider the Independent Remuneration Panel's report and recommendations (attached at Appendix A), and to resolve what action should be taken in respect of these recommendations; and
- (c) resolve that the agreed recommendations be implemented from the date of the Council's AGM in May 2023, with the exception of any recommendations relating to the index-linking of members' basic allowance which should be implemented from 1 April 2023 to ensure there is no break in the council's scheme.

#### **Reason:**

The Council must keep its Scheme of Allowances up-to-date. Although a full review is not yet due, the current scheme contains a clause stating that index-linking of members' basic allowance comes to an end on 31 March 2023 and a resolution of council would be needed to extend this. Furthermore structural changes to SBC's committee structure means that several Special Responsibility Allowances require review.

## Commissioner Review

Commissioners note the report and will take a view once the Appendix A, outlining the details of the recommendations are available.

## 2. Report

### Introductory paragraph

- 2.1 An Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) was convened for Slough Borough Council to advise the Council on specific aspects of its current Members' allowances scheme. Following consultation with Group Leaders and Independent Councillors, they were asked to review:
- SRAs for new committees or those whose remits changed significantly within the past year ie
    - Standards Committee Chair (a new committee)
    - Audit and Governance Committee Chair (which used to encompass Standards)
  - SRAs for Overview and Scrutiny members in light of changes to the structure of O&S from May 2023 ie
    - Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee Chair (new for May 2023)
    - Chairs of Task and Finish Groups
  - Renewal of the index-linking arrangements (the practice of increasing members' allowances in line with the national pay award made for local government employees) Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) for the Cabinet Members on the Commercial Sub-Committee and Vice Chairs of the Scrutiny Panels.

### Options considered

- 2.2 For Recommendations and options, please see Appendix A.

### Background

- 2.3 The Monitoring Officer has authority to appoint members to the Independent Remuneration Panel when casual vacancies arise. The following were appointed by him on 7 March 2023:
- Declan Hall (Chair)
  - Andrew Vallance
  - Chris Stevens
  - John Murtagh
- 2.4 Dr Declan Hall has Chaired Slough Borough Council's Independent Remuneration Panel in the past. He has extensive experience leading Independent Remuneration Panels and has served as Chairman for Panels across the country. Mr Vallance, Mr Stevens and Mr Murtagh have all previously served on IRPs for other councils in the local area. None have any links to Slough Borough Councillors or officers and are fully independent of the council. Dr Hall receives a commercial fee for training the rest of the panel, conducting benchmarking, chairing the panel and writing the panel's report. The other panel members each receive an allowance of £150. Full Council are invited to endorse their appointment.

2.5 The IRP convened on 15 March 2023. The full detail of their investigation and a list of the sources of evidence considered by the panel can be found in their report, at Appendix A.

### **3. Implications of the Recommendation**

#### **3.1 *Financial implications***

The net costs associated with the recommendations by the Panel are set out in Appendix A.

Appendix A was not available at the time of publication, so updated 'financial implications' will be published 'to follow' alongside Appendix A.

The 2022/23 budget for Members Allowances is £572k. Any additional cost or reduction in cost of the scheme overall for the coming year will result in a saving or pressure which would need to be funded corporately. If members were to agree a significant increase in the cost of the scheme overall, the council would need to identify additional savings from elsewhere in the overall SBC budget to fund this. For the purposes of this decision, a pressure of up to 3% of the budget (ie £17k) should not be considered 'significant'.

#### **3.2 *Legal implications***

The IRP was convened under The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021) (the 2003 Regulations). These regulations require all local authorities to set up and maintain an Independent Members' Remuneration Panel to periodically review and provide advice on Members' allowances. All Councils are required to convene their Remuneration Panel and seek its advice before they make any changes or amendments to their allowances scheme and they must 'have regard to' the IRP's recommendations before making or amending their Members' Allowances Scheme.

#### **3.3 *Risk management implications***

The primary risk associated with failing to provide appropriate allowances for Councillors would be that the financial implications of becoming a councillor could become prohibitive for people who might have made excellent candidates if they could afford it. In an ideal world, financial considerations would not be relevant for those willing to serve their communities as local councillors. The Members Allowance Scheme ought to fairly reflect the degree of time and work required from councillors in order to carry out their important democratic roles.

#### **3.4 *Environmental implications***

None

#### **3.5 *Equality implications***

A corollary to the risk set out at section 3.3 is that a financial disincentive of this sort would be disproportionately more likely to have an impact on those with smaller incomes, those still in full-time work or education, and people with caring responsibilities. The Members Allowance Scheme ought to fairly reflect the degree of

time and work required from councillors in order to carry out their important democratic roles.

#### **4. Background Papers**

None