



Council – 23 April 2014

Independent Remuneration Panel – Review of Members' Allowances

Purpose of report

This report recommends the appointment of four persons to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Members' Allowances in East Northamptonshire

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In accordance with Regulations under the Local Government Act 2000, the Council must establish an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to review councillors' allowances. Whilst minor changes have been made in recent years, the overall scheme has not been the subject of a full and independent review since 2008.
- 1.2 Given that a full review is required, a recruitment process has taken place to appoint new members to the IRP for East Northamptonshire. The IRP will undertake a full review in due course of all current allowances payable to councillors, as required by the regulations.
- 1.3 The IRP will also be appointed as the relevant Parish Remuneration Panel and will be responsible for making recommendations to town and parish councils within the district as to the types and levels of allowances payable to local councillors.
- 1.4 In addition to this, earlier this year, the Government undertook a consultation on new Standing Order Regulations for English local authorities. These included a proposal that local authorities set up an independent panel – drawn from the membership of their independent remuneration panels – to make recommendations to the Council in respect of the dismissal of statutory officers (Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer), should the officer call for such a body to be established. The authority would have to take account of the views of the panel, but would not be bound by its recommendation.

2.0 The Panel

- 2.1 The recruitment process for the Independent Remuneration Panel was completed in March 2014, with interviews being undertaken by the Deputy Chief Finance Officer and both Deputy Monitoring Officers (as the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer could potentially have a conflict of interest if the proposed amendment to the Standing Order regulations takes effect in future). It is worth noting that the recruitment process was subject to a public advert in the former Nene Valley News and applications were welcome from any resident of East Northamptonshire.
- 2.2 All applicants were invited for interview and each candidate was asked a number of questions. These covered their knowledge and experience, their understanding of the role of a councillor and how this was changing. They were also asked how they would balance the need to attract more people to stand as councillors against the growing financial pressure on councils.

2.3 After detailed consideration, the interview panel was unanimous in recommending that the following candidates should be invited to join the Independent Remuneration Panel:

- Mr Michael Dodson
- Mr Martyn Hale
- Mr Edward Owen; and
- Mrs Janet Wood

All four are resident within East Northamptonshire, are not members of or actively support any political party and are not disqualified from being a member of the council under section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972. They bring a variety of experience from working with business, charities and public bodies which will be of benefit. It is recommended that the appointments be made for a period of five years to provide a level of continuity until the anticipated election date of 2 May 2019.

2.4 More detailed information in respect of the four individuals has been shared with the political group leaders, who have been consulted prior to recommending these appointments to the Council.

2.5 In order to bring balance to the Panel, discussions are ongoing with Northamptonshire County Council and Welland Panels in respect of co-opting a fifth member of the IRP, who would be able to bring the benefit of their experience to the work of the newly constituted body. It is recommended that authority be delegated to the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager to co-opt where an expression of interest is received from an individual on the Northamptonshire IRP.

3.0 Activities of the Panel

3.1 Whilst the IRP has the discretion to determine how it discharges functions and responsibilities, the Leader of the Council has asked for a full review of the current Members' Allowances Scheme to be undertaken at the earliest opportunity. To this end, training and information is planned to be provided to the panel members following confirmation of their appointment.

3.2 As the Council has now agreed its Calendar of Meetings for the 2014/15 municipal year, it is proposed that the Panel will submit its report and recommendations for consideration on 15 December 2014. It may be possible to present an interim report in October 2014, but this will be dependent on the level of consideration required in respect of all elements of the allowances scheme.

4.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

4.1 There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003 require the Council to appoint an IRP and set out the qualifications for membership, which has been undertaken as part of the recruitment process.

6.0 Risk Management

6.1 Failure to appoint an IRP will further delay the much needed review of Members' Allowances and may result in a report and recommendations not being ready for consideration by the council prior to the end of its term of office in May 2015. This report recommends the appointment of four persons to the IRP to ensure that the review can commence immediately.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 It is recommended that the Council agree to pay travel expenses to members of the IRP at the agreed HMRC rate of £0.45 per mile. The cost of this will be met within existing budgets.

8.0 Constitutional Implications

8.1 There are no constitutional implications associated with this report.

9.0 Corporate Outcomes

9.1 The appointment of members of the IRP will ensure that the council continues to demonstrate openness and transparency in decision making and this directly contributes to the priority of Strong Community Leadership.


10.0 Recommendation

10.1 The Council is recommended to resolve:

1) That the appointment of Mr Michael Dodson, Mr Martyn Hale, Mr Edward Owen and Mrs Janet Wood to the East Northamptonshire Independent Remuneration Panel until May 2019 be confirmed.

2) That, in the event of an appropriate expression of interest being received, authority be delegated to the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager to co-opt a member of the Northamptonshire or Welland Independent Remuneration Panels.

3) That the Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel be paid travelling expenses at a rate of £0.45 per mile for journeys made to attend meetings where they discharge their functions and responsibilities.

Legal	Power: Local Government Act 2000				
	Other considerations: The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003				
Background Papers: N/A					
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