

Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) Meeting Notes

Thursday 14 January 2021

A virtual meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) was held at 2pm on Thursday 14 January 2021

Panel:-

Michael Dyer - Director, Head of Business Law, Verisona
Sue Dovey - Chief Executive, Action Hampshire
Brian Johnson - BAE Systems
Mark Waldron, Editor of The News

Officers:-

Peter Baulf, City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Stewart Agland, Local Democracy Manager
Karen Kenneally, Finance
Vicki Plytas, Senior Local Democracy Officer
Peter Smith-Parkyn, Governance and Democratic officer

Stewart Agland welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves. He thanked the Panel Members for being willing to assist in the Members' Allowances Scheme process.

Brian Johnson agreed to Chair the meeting and this was supported by the other panel members.

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

Summary of discussion

The Panel members confirmed they had received and read the documents for the meeting (listed below) and confirmed they had a broad understanding of the roles of councillors.

- Comparator Overview dated October 2020
- South East Employers (SEE) Members Allowances Survey 2019
- SEE Members Allowances Survey 2020
- Unitary Authorities Comparison Document
- Questionnaire and anonymised responses received

Background

Stewart Agland advised that PCC Members' Allowances are index-linked, which means that instead of an annual review (which the Regulations would otherwise require) the Council must review the scheme every 4 years and the meeting today was to fulfil that requirement. He referred to the questionnaire that had been circulated to councillors to seek their views on any aspects of the scheme and the 5 responses received had been circulated to the panel.

The purpose of the Panel meeting was to review the Scheme having regard to the comparator information provided and the responses received from Members, with a view to agreeing recommendations on it (via Governance & Audit & Standards Committee) to a future Full Council meeting.

A general discussion then took place during which it was agreed by panel members that being a councillor was very demanding and the remuneration should be sufficient to encourage participation in local democracy.

The Panel noted that of the 5 responses received 4 considered that allowances should not be increased at this time, other than in line with the index-linked amount.

Although the Panel thought that responder 5 had some comments that they would like to look at in greater depth, they agreed that at the moment given the current climate and the hardship caused by the Covid 19 pandemic, they did not feel comfortable about recommending any changes. Members of the panel acknowledged that trying to decide on a pecking order in respect of the various panels and committees was very difficult and were not inclined to make any changes to the Special Responsibilities Allowances at this time.

During discussion

- In relation to the separate remuneration of members appointed on to Outside Bodies, it was noted these positions, which are funded by the external bodies concerned, are outside the remit of the scheme, and there is already a footnote to that effect within the existing scheme.
- It was confirmed that the panel had never before considered whether there should be an aspiration to pay median or upper quartile members' allowances. Members of the panel considered that benchmarking against other authorities was useful but only to determine whether PCC's allowances were broadly in line with those of other authorities. They did not consider that there should be a competitive element.
- It was confirmed that the differentials in the SRAs had been changed before and this option was open to the panel to recommend again.

Members of the Panel discussed all the information before them and concluded that the current Members' Allowances Scheme should remain in its existing form for the time being as, given the current climate and the hardship caused by the Covid 19 pandemic, they did not feel it was appropriate to recommend any changes. However they recognised that the role of councillors was onerous and they had noted several areas that they would like to look at in the future and therefore they would aim to consider the scheme again in approximately one year's time.

RECOMMENDATIONS to Council (via Governance & Audit & Standards Committee)

- (1) That no change should be made at present to any of the various elements comprising the Members' Allowances Scheme ("the Scheme") attached as Appendix 1 on the basis that the existing index linked arrangement should continue to be applied.**
- (2) To note that the Panel aims to revisit the Scheme in around one year's time to consider any possible changes the Panel may deem appropriate at that time**
- (3) Note in any event a further review will be required within four years of the last review taking place**
- (4) That the existing Independent Review Panel be retained as a Standing Panel in the interim period, to consider issues that arise in connection with the Scheme before the next review, either by email or in meetings.**

The meeting ended at 14.40.