

### Governance Committee: Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel: Members' Allowances Scheme 2007/08 - Review

#### Background

- 1 The Independent Remuneration Panel last reviewed the Members' Allowances Scheme in March and May 2006 and reported via the Governance Committee to the County Council in July 2006. At its meeting on 8th November 2007 the Panel considered oral and written evidence comprising submissions from the Leader and Chairman of the County Council, the level of relevant allowances paid by comparator authorities and information about the approaches taken to approved duties and subsistence by those authorities. The Panel also had a summary of feedback from a cross-section of members of the County Council whose views were canvassed shortly before the Panel meeting. The report of the Panel, together with its recommendations, is **enclosed as an [Appendix](#)**. Mrs Caroline Nicholls, the new Chairman of the Panel, attended the meeting to present the Panel's report and answer questions on it. The Committee has considered carefully the Panel's recommendations and thanked the Panel for its work. The recommendations the Council is asked to approve are set out at the end of this report. The Committee noted that the Panel intends to carry out a 'root and branch' review of the Members' Allowances Scheme during 2008 and 2009 and to report in the autumn of 2009.

#### Special Responsibility Allowances

- 2 The Committee supported the intention of the Panel to carry out a root and branch review of the Members' Allowances Scheme. In the light of that, the Committee proposes that the West Sussex allowances for the Leader, Cabinet Members and chairmen of non-Executive committees should be moved to the mid-point of comparator county councils while the substantial review of allowances is carried out by the Panel. This will result in SRAs of £29,394 for the Leader, £18,283 for Cabinet Members and £8,989 for non-Executive committee chairmen.

#### Approved Duties and Subsistence Allowances

- 3 The Panel has recommended that political group meetings held for the purpose of discussing County Council business, for example before meetings of the County Council, should be added to the list of approved duties for the payment of travelling and carer's allowances subject to a maximum of two such group meetings between each successive meeting of the County Council.
- 4 The Panel has also recommended that subsistence allowances should be payable for attendance at all conferences, seminars and meetings held away from County Hall, irrespective of who convenes the event. The Panel has also made recommendations to clarify the position in relation to subsistence for overnight stays, namely that the overnight rate relates to hotel accommodation. In addition the Panel recommends that members should be able to claim payment of up to £25 for dinner away from home as part of an approved duty involving an overnight stay.

### Recommended

- (1)
  - (a) That the SRAs for the Leader, Cabinet Members and non-Executive chairmen be set at £29,394, £18,283 and £8,989 respectively to place them at the mid-point of those allowances paid by comparator county councils;
  - (b) That no changes be made to the levels of the SRAs for Deputies to Cabinet Members; the County Chairman; the County Vice-Chairman or Minority Group Leaders, other than to continue to increase them all in accordance with the index linking formula which is now part of the County Council's Scheme;
- (2) That attendance at political group meetings held specifically for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the County Council should be added to the list of duties approved by the County Council for the payment of appropriate travelling and carer's allowances and listed in Schedule 2 of the County Council's Scheme. This is subject to: the approval not extending to more than two political group meetings between each successive meeting of the County Council; to each Group Secretary being required to certify that any such group meeting has been principally concerned with County Council business, and to provide records of attendance to the County Secretary;
- (3) That the provisions of paragraph 4 (a) (i) of the County Council's Scheme be amended by the deletion of the words "convened by organisations other than the County Council" so that members are able to claim expenses incurred at meetings etc, where appropriate, whether or not the meeting has been convened by the county council or otherwise";
- (4) That, to make clear that subsistence allowances are reimbursement for expenditure actually incurred by members; to provide a more realistic allowance for evening meals taken as part of an overnight stay; and, to make clear that the overnight stay rates are for accommodation costs only, Schedule 3 of the County Council's Scheme of Allowances be amended by; the addition, in the opening line of the words; "for or towards expenditure actually incurred," after the words "...will be paid..." in that line; in paragraph (1) of the words; "an evening meal allowance of up to £25 where a meal is taken as part of an absence overnight from the usual place of residence in the performance of an approved duty"; and, in paragraph (3) of the words "to cover the cost of accommodation" after the word "rate" in each case where it appears in that paragraph;

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- (5) That the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2007/08 be amended to reflect the changes set out above, with effect from 14th December, 2007; and
- (6) That the Council note that the IRP has welcomed the progress made by the County Council in establishing opportunities for the personal development of individual members and that the IRP hopes that the County Council will continue to refine the process to allow regular monitoring of member performance in the discharge of any special responsibilities they hold and that such monitoring will assist the IRP in recommending levels of SRAs in the future.

**Margaret Johnson**  
Chairman

Background Paper

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel to the Governance Committee on 26th November 2007

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