

## CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

**MINUTES of the meeting of the Constitution Committee held on Monday 10th March, 2014 commencing at 2.00 pm.**

### **PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:**

Cllr Colin Guyton	Cllr Nigel Moor
Cllr Mark Hawthorne	Cllr Ray Theodoulou
Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Cllr Lesley Williams
Cllr Steve McHale	Cllr Will Windsor-Clive

**Substitutes:** Cllr Iain Dobie (in place of Cllr Jeremy Hilton)

**Also in Attendance:** William Alexander, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel  
Richard Blamey, Panel member.

**Officers in attendance:** Jane Burns, Director of Strategy and Challenge and Monitoring Officer  
Christine Wray, Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer  
Simon Harper, Head of Democratic Services  
Joanne Bolton, Democratic Services Adviser

**Apologies:** Cllr Jeremy Hilton

### **65. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **66. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No questions from members of the public had been received.

### **67. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

No questions from members had been received.

### **68. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

68.1 William Alexander, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) attended the meeting and presented the Panel's report and recommendations for the 2014-15 revision of the Members' Allowances Scheme.

- 68.2 He informed the Committee that the Panel had conducted an in-depth review of all matters relating to the remuneration of members. Throughout October 2013, 27 face to face interviews were conducted with a wide range of members taking into account length of service, political persuasion, back bencher, or Special Responsibility Allowance holder. He emphasised to the Committee how much he appreciated the members being so open and frank in their responses during the interviews.
- 68.3 Mr Alexander reported that the Panel believed the current basic allowance of £8,800 undervalued the role of county councillors, and the Panel was unanimous in its view that the appropriate rate of basic allowance for 2014/15 was in excess of £10,000. The Panel believed that at this level the basic allowance would more accurately reflect the value of county councillors, recognising the time and level of work involved in carrying out their role, and would assist in attracting a wider pool of electoral candidates at election time.
- 68.4 Mr Alexander informed the Committee that the Panel did recognise however, that the severe financial pressure on local authorities meant that now was not the right time to make a significant change to allowances. The Panel was therefore suggesting that the increase in basic allowance should be linked to the pay of council staff.
- 68.5 He explained that the net effect of all of the proposed changes the Panel was recommending would increase the members' allowances budget by just less than 2%. Therefore broadly in line with the staff pay rise of 1% in 2013-14 and the anticipated rise of 1% in 2014-15.
- 68.6 Whilst there was recognition from members of the Committee that increasing the basic allowance in excess of £10,000 could not be justified, there was a degree of feeling amongst some members of whether there would ever be a right time to make a significant change to allowances. Mr Alexander confirmed that one of options the Panel would consider for the future, if it felt the basic allowance should be increased, would be to increase the basic allowance through a series of milestones, so in effect gradually, over a period of time.
- 68.7 Mr Alexander stressed that whilst remuneration was a factor in attracting election candidates, it was not the all important element. A common theme arising from the members' interviews was that there was a strong desire to make a difference in their local area, which was why they had stood for election in the first place. Many members had stated during their interviews, that they were unaware at the time of standing for election, that an allowance was paid.
- 68.8 Members discussed the need for more younger people to stand for election, and the Chairman of the Committee reported that the Local Government Association had been doing some work looking into the age profile of county councillors nationally. He was aware that whilst younger people were standing for election, the problem, which was a national one, was retaining them (by them standing again rather than not being re-elected) for more than one term.

- 68.9 Mr Alexander informed the Committee of the changes the Panel was recommending to specific Special Responsibility Allowances including the recommendation that the 'only one SRA rule' should be abolished in the cause of good governance and to reflect the no-overall majority position. He believed that this should be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 68.10 In response to a question, members were made aware that the current 'only one SRA rule' was historical and was more relevant under the previous 'committee system' where elected members could be elected as chairperson for numerous committees and receive an SRA for each one.
- 68.11 Richard Blamey, a member of the IRP, informed the Committee that he had attended a recent meeting of the Pensions Committee to gain a better understanding of the role of the committee. He explained that as the Pensions Committee's work in overseeing the sums invested in the Gloucestershire Local Government Pension Fund was an extremely important and responsible role, the Panel believed there to be a strong case for the chairman of the Pensions Committee to be awarded a SRA in line with the chairs of the other committees.
- 68.12 The Committee was also informed that a number of adjustments had been made to the special responsibility allowances to ensure that the overall increase was maintained within 2%. Mr Alexander was anxious to point out that this in no way reflected negatively on the holders of the positions affected.
- 68.13 Mr Alexander informed the Committee that lots of very positive comments had been made by members, during their interviews, regarding the Member Induction Programme, following the May 2013 elections.
- 68.14 In response to a question concerning on-going member development, members were made aware that a report on member training would be received at a forthcoming Group Leaders' meeting. Leading from this, members' training needs would then need to be ascertained. A training programme was expected to be in place by the end of April 2014. It was anticipated that the training could be provided at minimal cost to the authority and therefore all members should be able to participate in the training they required.
- 68.15 The Committee, having considered the Panel's proposals, was unanimous in its support of increasing the basic allowance and making adjustments to specific Special Responsibility Allowances from 1 April 2014, as outlined below.
- 68.16 The Committee therefore resolved:

***TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:***

- (a) *To increase the Basic Allowance from £8,800 to £9,000 from 1 April 2014 to reflect staff pay rises for 2013-14 and 2014-15.*

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*To make the following adjustments to SRAs from 1 April 2014:*

- (b) To remove the rule of 'only one SRA'. This change does not increase the budget for allowances as the budget assumes that all allowances are taken up.*
- (c) To adjust the BA multiple (0.66 to 0.6) for the SRAs for committee chairmen and members of the Adoption Panel and Fostering Panel. This will reduce the value of the SRA from £5,808 to £5,400.*
- (d) To adjust the BA multiple (0.33 to 0.3) for the SRA for the Vice-chairman of the Council. This will reduce the value of the SRA from £2,970 to £2,700.*
- (e) To set the SRAs for the leaders of the main political groups at a BA multiple of 0.65 resulting in an allowance £5,850.*
- (f) To increase the qualifying number of members for a full Group Leader's allowance from 4 to 5 members and that Group Leaders of 2, 3 or 4 members receive a proportion of the full allowance. For example, the leader of a group with 3 members would receive 3/5 of the SRA resulting in an allowance of £3,510.*
- (g) That the chairman of the Pensions Committee be given a SRA of 0.6 x BA in line with the allowance for other committee chairmen. This will result in an SRA of £5,400.*
- (h) To discontinue the provision of a SRA to the Deputy Leader of Council and Cabinet Project Champions.*
- (i) To maintain the SRAs for the Political Group Spokespersons, commonly referred to as 'Shadows', at their current monetary value of £1,500.*

68.17 The Chairman on behalf of the Committee expressed his gratitude to William Alexander as Chairman of the Panel, and indeed the rest of the panel members, for all of their hard work relating to the remuneration of elected members.

## **69. CONSTITUTION CHANGES**

The Committee considered a report from the Monitoring Officer which outlined the following amendments to the constitution:

### **69.1 Procedural Standing Orders: Recorded votes**

The Committee resolved.

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**TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:**

*That Procedural Standing Orders be amended by the addition of the following new paragraph 15.7 and re-numbering of subsequent paragraphs:*

*“15.7 Immediately after any vote is taken at a budget decision meeting there shall be recorded in the minutes of the proceedings of that meeting the names of the persons who cast a vote for the decision, or against the decision or who abstained from voting.”*

**69.2 Cabinet Procedure Rules: Time Limit for submitting questions to Cabinet**

The Committee resolved:

**TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:**

*That Cabinet Procedure Rule 9.3 be amended to read:*

*“A written copy of the question must have been delivered to the Chief executive by 4.00pm three clear working days before the date of the meeting.”*

**69.3 Ratification of changes made by the Monitoring Officer under delegated powers**

The Committee approved the changes and resolved:

**TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:**

*To ratify the changes to the Constitution made by the Monitoring Officer under delegated powers regarding:*

- (a) The Confidential Reporting Procedure for Employees (whistle blowing).*
- (b) In Article 6.03.1 the deletion of the words ‘but normally only in the event of a change of political control of the Council’.*

**CHAIRPERSON**

Meeting concluded at 14:45