

MINUTE EXTRACT - COUNCIL MEETING, 28<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2018CL.23 REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

The Council was requested to consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel following its review of Members' Allowances.

The Head of Paid Service introduced the item and, in so doing, welcomed Mrs. Jane Winstanley, the Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel to the Meeting. He also explained that whilst the final decision on any scheme was reserved by law to the Council, Members were required to have regard to the recommendations of the Panel.

Mrs. Winstanley then proceeded to present the findings of the Panel. She explained that all Members should be commended on not having increased their Allowances during a time when Officers had not received an increase in salary. She thanked Members for their time given to contribute to the review, and to be interviewed by the Panel; and added that the Panel had informally sought the views of constituents in regards to the proposed changes – as part of which there had been public recognition of the difficult decisions Members had to make on behalf of the Council, including in respect of their own remuneration.

Mrs. Winstanley then highlighted a number of key findings of the Panel - with specific regard to the ICT allowance, she explained that a no change recommendation had been made pending the outcome of the current review Members' ICT; car allowances should be set at the HMRC level; and the Panel would undertake further work, including liaison with the Department Work Pension (DWP), in respect of allowances for those Members who were registered as carers.

Mrs. Winstanley praised those Members who received a private income and had therefore elected not to claim the full allowance permitted.

In conclusion, Mrs. Winstanley reiterated that, owing to the fact that allowances had not been increased for 10 years and, in the hope of encouraging younger people to stand for election, the Panel had recommended what it considered to be realistic and reasonable allowances, and a scheme which would bring the Council more in line with many of its peers. She also thanked all Officers and Members for their assistance in the Panel's work.

A Member commented that he felt it would be beneficial for all Members to see the full Panel report and the comparison tables of the Council against other authorities. The Head of Paid Service explained that comparisons had been made against all south west councils, the other Gloucestershire authorities and West Oxfordshire District Council. He also confirmed that overall, the Councils' basic allowance was far less than other authorities, which had led to the Panel's recommendations, which also sought to ensure that the Council did not continue to 'artificially deflate allowances'.

Another Member commented that the Panel had undertaken a large volume work in regards to reviewing the allowances and, given the fact no increase had been made in 10 years, expressed his support for the Panel's recommendations.

It was PROPOSED and SECONDED that the Panel's recommendations be approved.

Other Members, however, expressed their view that, whilst supporting the majority of recommendations, the recommendation for backdating the increase to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 was 'immoral' and commented that Members had been aware of the available allowances when elected to office in May 2015. Those Members also considered that, given the closeness to the end of the four-year Council term, any increase should apply from the start of the new Council term in May 2019.

An AMENDMENT was duly Proposed and Seconded that the Panel's recommendations be presented at the first Meeting of the newly-elected Council in May 2019 for decision.

A Member commented that he considered a pre-determined formula allowing annual, smaller, increases to be the best approach.

A FURTHER PROPOSITION was made and seconded that a £5,000 basic allowance be applied, which should then be increased annually in-line with any staff pay award.

At this juncture, an adjournment was requested to enable Members/Groups to consider the various Propositions. The Chairman agreed to this request.

Note:

At this juncture, the Meeting was adjourned in order to allow time for Members to consider the various Propositions.

On reconvening, the Original Proposition and Further Proposition were withdrawn; meaning that the Amendment remained, which would be the subject of a formal vote (as the only remaining Proposition).

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.6, a recorded vote was requested; and this request was supported by the requisite number of Members.

A Member expressed his disappointment that the work of the Panel was not being recognised and that he felt the Council should make a decision at the Meeting. He commented that the Panel had spoken to constituents who had been shocked to find out the current amount paid to Councillors and who considered the allowances merited increase; and felt, therefore, that a decision should not be delayed until May 2019.

The Leader of the Council commented that the suggested increase, in percentage terms of 125%, was entirely justifiable and was disproportionate to Officer awards over the same period. The Leader therefore expressed his support for deferring a decision.

Some Members commented that any deferment of the decision would result in no current Member getting an opportunity to vote on the recommendations. Those Members explained that the Panel had been set up at the request of the Council and had delivered its findings which did not suggest a large increase in allowances.

Attention was drawn to the fact that some Members attended a large number of parish council meetings in addition to those of the Council and the workload of some Members was very substantial; and that some non-executive directors of the Council received more in allowances than elected Members.

Other Members reiterated their support for the proposal for deferment explaining that backdating allowances gave entirely the wrong impression; and were of the opinion that Officer salaries should be reviewed prior to any determining Members' allowances.

On being put to the vote, the PROPOSITION was APPROVED.

Note:

The Record of Voting was as follows:-

For: - Councillors SI Andrews, Mark F Annett, Julian Beale, AW Berry, Alison Coggins, RW Dutton, David Fowles, C Hancock, Maggie Heaven, SG Hirst, RL Hughes, Mrs. SL Jepson, RG Keeling, MGE MacKenzie-Charrington, RA Morgan, NJW Parsons, SDE Parsons, Tina Stevenson, Lynden Stowe, R Theodoulou and LR Wilkins - Total: 21;

Against: -Total: 0;

Abstentions: - Councillors AR Brassington, T Cheung, Sue Coakley, PCB Coleman, Jenny Forde, JA Harris, M Harris, Jenny Hincks, RC Hughes, Juliet Layton, Dilys Neill, Total: 12;

Absent: - Councillor NP Robbins, Total: 1.

(END)