

## **Report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel**

Cabinet Member:

Division and Local Member: All

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### **1. Summary/link to the Corporate Plan**

- 1.1.** This report sets out the report and recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (“the Panel”) following their fundamental review of the Scheme of Member’s Allowances.
- 1.2.** The arrangements for determining allowances for elected members are set down in statutory regulations - the Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021) and subsequent amendments to the regulations (SI 2003/1022 and SI 2003/1692). Each local authority is required to appoint and maintain an Independent Panel to make recommendations to the Council on members’ allowances. The County Council, West Somerset Council, Mendip District Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council established a joint panel to advise the councils’ on their respective Schemes. The Council must have regard to the Panel’s recommendations before making decisions in relation to members’ allowances but doesn’t have to accept them. Where the Council doesn’t accept the Panel’s recommendations it should give reasons for not doing so.
- 1.3** All Members have a personal and prejudicial interest in the receipt of allowances but the Council’s Code of Conduct includes a dispensation allowing members to attend relevant meetings and vote on this matter. This paragraph has the effect of declaring this interest by all Members at this meeting of Council. Members do not need therefore to make a verbal declaration at the Council meeting.

### **2. Recommendations**

#### **2.1 Council is recommended to:**

- (a) Consider the Panel’s recommendations set out in the Panel’s report attached as the Annex to this report – as summarised in section 2 – Executive Summary of the Annex (and which includes a revised Scheme of Members’ Allowances for 2017- 12) and decide accordingly.**
- (b) Consider and agree that any changes to SRA payments as a result of decisions by the Council are backdated to the date of appointment.**
- (c) Authorise the Strategic Manager, Governance & Risk to make any amendments to the Scheme of Members’ Allowances 2017-18 (attached as Appendix C to the Annex to this report) required as a result of the Council’s decisions in (a) above.**

### **3 Background**

**3.1** In February 2017 the Council agreed to continue to apply the existing Scheme of Members' Allowances for the 2017/18 financial year starting on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, pending the County Council elections and a review of the Scheme. Members of the old Council will be aware the Panel spent the months in advance of May taking evidence from members as part of the review. The Panel has met on a number of occasions in recent months and most recently on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July. The culmination of that work is set out in the report of the Panel attached as the Annex to this paper which includes recommendations for changes to the Scheme of Members' Allowances. The revised Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2017/18 which reflects the Panel's recommendations is attached to the Panel's report as Appendix C.

**3.2** Backdating:

Where there are changes in payments the Council has the option to backdate the changes to the date of appointment in the case of SRA amendments.

### **4. Implications**

**4.1** Financial: The full year impact of applying the Panel's recommendations in full to the decisions of the Council and the Leader in May 2017 would see an overall reduction in the cost of the SRA structure of £5398 pa (a reduction from a total cost of £230,855 to £225,457) over a full financial year. This doesn't take account of the payment being made by the Council to the independent chair of the Corporate Parenting Board which is now being funded outside of the Scheme of Members' Allowances and therefore outside of the members' budget.

**4.2** Legal: The legal requirements are set out in the report.

**4.3** Risk: The risks are reputational rather than legal. The Council does not have to accept the Panel's recommendations but where it chooses not to do so it should give reasons that can be part of the record of the meeting. The Council is required to give reasons where it chooses not to accept Panel recommendations on allowances.

**4.4** Impact Assessment: There are no direct equalities implications arising from any of the proposals in this report. There are also no sustainability or community safety implications.

### **5. Background papers**

**5.1** None.