

Chichester District Council

CABINET

8 September 2015

Review of Members Allowances Scheme

1. Contacts

Report Author:

Philip Coleman, Member Services Manager,
Tel: 01243 534655 E-mail: pcoleman@chichester.gov.uk

Cabinet Member:

Philippa Hardwick, Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance,
Tel: 01243 661866 E-mail: phardwick@chichester.gov.uk

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That as a matter of urgency, the following persons are appointed to form the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel:

**Mr Michael Bevis
Mr John Pressdee
Mr John Thompson**

3. Background

- 3.1. The Council's Scheme of Members Allowances is due for review. The Council normally reviews the scheme every four years during the year of the election, with a view to introducing the revised scheme from 1 April the following year – in this case 1 April 2016. The review is carried out so that its impact can be taken into account in setting the budget. The review, therefore, needs to start now with a view to consideration and decision-making at the Cabinet and Council meetings in January 2016.
- 3.2. The process is governed by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The Regulations provide that it is for each local authority to decide its scheme and the amounts to be paid under that scheme. Because it is difficult for Councils to consider these matters objectively, they are required to establish and maintain an independent remuneration panel (IRP) to provide them with advice on their scheme. The Council must have regard to this advice, but is not required to follow it.
- 3.3. The Council has had an IRP consisting of three persons at all previous reviews. Two of the members of the existing panel are willing to continue and undertake the review that is now due, but the other member has resigned. This report proposes appointment of a panel comprising the two existing members and a new third member.

4. Outcomes to be achieved

- 4.1. Appointment of a local panel of independent persons to review the Council's Scheme of Members Allowances and recommend any changes in time for the revised scheme to be approved by the Council at its meeting in January 2016.

5. Proposal

- 5.1. The two members of the existing IRP who have agreed to continue are Mr Michael Bevis and Mr John Pressdee. The member who has resigned is Mr Peter Headey.
- 5.2. An experienced member of Arun's IRP, Mr John Thompson, has been approached and has expressed a willingness to join the Chichester IRP. There are likely to be benefits to both authorities from a cross-fertilisation of ideas between IRPs.
- 5.3. On previous occasions the IRP has met initially to determine the issues it needs to consider and to approve a questionnaire to enable all members to make an input to the review. A period needs to elapse to enable this survey to take place and the results to be analysed. The Panel then holds further meetings to interview a selection of members in more depth and to formulate its recommendations.
- 5.4. If the Panel's recommendations are to be ready for consideration at the January Cabinet meeting, the initial meeting of the IRP needs to take place in early September, with the survey being undertaken in September. The Panel would then meet to interview members and formulate its recommendations during October and November, and approve its report in December.
- 5.5. Although appointment of the IRP is normally a full Council decision, with the agreement of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it is suggested that the Cabinet appoints Messrs Bevis, Pressdee and Thompson to the Panel as an urgent decision, with a full report of that decision being made to the Council meeting on 22 September.

6. Alternatives that have been considered

- 6.1. On the occasion of the last vacancy a member was recruited through public advertisement and interview by the other members of the Panel. However, to do that this time would result in a delay to the review so that its results would not be produced in time to be taken into account in setting the budget.

7. Resource and legal implications

- 7.1. No remuneration is paid to members of the IRP, only expenses. The resource implications arising from the decision to appoint a Panel are, therefore, minimal.

8. Consultation

- 8.1. The existing members of the Panel have been consulted and have no objections to the appointment of Mr Thompson.

8.2. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed to the use of the urgency procedure. All members have been informed of the intention to use that procedure and, at the time of writing, there have been no expressions of concern and five indications of assent.

9. Community impact and corporate risks

9.1. It is always difficult for councillors to make decisions on their own allowances, hence the requirement for a panel of independent persons to advise them. It is important that the panel is seen to be competent but independent of councillors, who are therefore not invited to take part in the recruitment process.

10. Other Implications

Crime & Disorder:	None
Climate Change:	None
Human Rights and Equality Impact:	None
Safeguarding:	None

11. Background Papers

11.1. None