

REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

FULL COUNCIL 18 MARCH 2019

Chair: Councillor Opoku

INTRODUCTION

This report from the Standards Committee of the 4th of March recommends that Full Council revoke the Members Allowance Scheme for 2018/19 and approve the new Members Allowance Scheme for 2019/20, to take effect from 1 April 2019 to the 31 March 2020. The amendments to the scheme for 2019/20 include explicit provision for maternity, paternity and sickness leave. It also contains express provision for adoption and shared parental leave. The report further proposes a 2% uplift to all Members' basic allowance in line with the pay settlement increase expected for staff. The Leader has indicated his intention to continue to appoint 2 Assistant Cabinet Members and the report further proposes an additional 2 Special Responsibility Allowances for these two posts for 2019/20.

We consistently considered the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel [IRP] published in 2018 [Appendix B] established by London Councils, which makes recommendations in respect of the Members' allowances payable by London boroughs at our meetings in July, January, and March when considering proposed changes to the Members Allowance Scheme 2019/20.

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2019/20

In considering the proposed scheme at appendix A, we all agreed the added provision for maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental and sick leave was important in meeting equalities objectives, and recognising that the demographic of Councillors had changed over the years. We agreed that there was a need for the Council to openly provide support to Councillors that become parents, or needed to take a prolonged leave of absence due to ill health, and not be discouraged from doing so. These changes would bring the Council in line with neighbouring borough policies and meet a recommendation of the IRP.

We discussed the options of a 1%, 2% or no uplift to all Member's basic allowance, considering our overall equalities duty and need to provide all Councillors with as fair remuneration as possible, reflecting the level of their duties, commitment and responsibility in the community. It was recognised that Councillors needed to reflect the demographic of their wards and there needed to be some attraction to the local councillor role, in the future, for local people. An increase in the basic allowance could also mean, in some cases, Councillors being able to commit more time to their Councillor role rather than their employment role. Some Members expressed a view that there should be no uplift to the basic allowance given there was to be a fuller review of the Members allowance scheme being undertaken in the coming municipal year by the Committee. Also the potential negative response this increase could receive in the community was highlighted.

Consideration was also given to the proposed cost of the increases on the overall Council budget. It was noted that the proposed 2% uplift to the basic allowance would still keep this figure under the recommended IRP basic allowance figure of £11,045. It was clarified that the 2% increase would be to the basic allowance and not the SRA amount. Following consideration of Committee Member's individual view of this matter, a vote was taken with three in favour of the uplift to the basic allowance and two against. It was resolved that a 2% uplift to Members Allowances be recommended to full Council.

We further considered the proposal to add 2 additional Special Responsibility Allowances [SRA's] for the Assistant Cabinet Member posts. This would involve remunerating the Assistant Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities, and the Assistant Cabinet Member for Broadwater Farm & Northumberland Park Housing Standards. We debated the level of commitment that these roles would entail, noting the major projects and cross cutting strategic issues that the Assistant Cabinet Members were leading on.

Some members advocated that these roles would need to be fairly remunerated due to the additional work being carried out by the Assistant Cabinet Members. Also the level of commitment to these roles required was felt, by some Members, to be similar to the Cabinet roles.

There was a view expressed that given the information provided in the report, these roles were no different to other non- cabinet and non Committee roles undertaken by other Councillors and should not be remunerated at this time. Instead, there should be a fuller consideration of the activities and responsibilities of these roles, along with other SRA roles, in the forthcoming review of Member's Allowances.

We also noted that, the original proposed remuneration figure of £5000 had been updated to £6700. This figure was reached by considering the IRP report at appendix B page 8 which recommended a band 1 SRA's should be on a sliding scale of between 20-30% of the remuneration package of the Leader. We noted that there were five London Boroughs with Assistant Cabinet Members, paying an average SRA of £6545 per post. We queried whether the duties carried out by these roles were similar and questioned the different numbers of Assistant Cabinet Member roles to the number of Members receiving an SRA at these boroughs. It was felt that due to the differing composition of boroughs, there was unlikely to be a pattern.

Following consideration of Committee Member's individual view of this matter, a vote was taken with three in favour and two against. It was resolved to recommend to full Council that the 2 Assistant Cabinet Member positions receive a special responsibility allowance of £6700 each.

We further considered the suggestion in relation to Licensing Committees and agreed that there should be legal advice sought and consultation with the Regulatory Committee Chair.

We agreed that there would be no further changes to the existing SRA positions for 2019/20. We would be undertaking a wider review of SRA's in the coming municipal

year, considering in more detail SRA positions, in relation to responsibilities and activities.

WE RECOMMEND

That Full Council:

1. Revoke the Members Allowance Scheme for 2018/19 as of 31 March 2019;
2. Approve the new Members' Allowances Scheme for 2019-20, as set out in Appendix A of the attached report, to take effect from 1 April 2019.