

REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE 03/2023/24

FULL COUNCIL 14 March 2024

Chair: Councillor Ibrahim Ali

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report arises from the Standards Committee meetings held on the 5th of March 2024 and asks Full Council to consider the following:
- 1.2 To revoke the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023/24 as of 31 March 2024 and to approve a new Members' Allowances Scheme, set out at Appendix 3, for the Municipal year 2024/25 to take effect from 1 April 2024.
- 1.3 The updated carers claim form attached at appendix 5.
- 1.4 Changes to Council Standing Orders and Full Council meeting protocol relating to deletion of the Haringey debate provision, the meeting process for motions, Mayor's communications and having additional Oral Council questions.

2. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2024/25

- 2.1 The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 allow London Boroughs to use an Independent Remuneration Panel set up for the purpose of making recommendations across London. London Councils set up a panel for this purpose in 2001 and its most recent report was published on 5th of January 2024 following a detailed review, with recommendations on the remuneration of Councillors in London.
- 2.2 We noted that the independent review of Members' Allowance commissioned by the Committee in 2019/20 indicated that the Members' Basic Allowance percentage increase be index linked to the local government officer pay percentage increase, capped at 2% to be reduced if a lesser percentage is agreed. In 2023/ 2024, the Standards Committee agreed to keep to this principle and recommended a 2% increase in the basic allowance. We noted that in 2023, the local government officer pay percentage increase, for 2023/24 is 3.88% on all pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer. The current basic allowance is 11,472 and if a 2% increase was agreed this would rise to by £229.44 to £11,701.44 (rounded to (£11, 701.00)). This would require additional budget spend of around £13, 053.00(57x £229.00). We were in favour of a 2% increase in the basic allowance and saw this as a reasonable adjustment for the increase in volume of casework, increased communications through emails and taking account that Councillor colleagues were spending on additional resources to maintain increased volume of work and had families themselves to support.

- 2.3 The Independent Remuneration Panel set up for the purpose of making recommendations across London on Members' Allowances schemes report, published on 5th of January 2024, further supported this recommended increase in the basic allowance and contained much wider details and analysis of SRA's for London Councils to consider. We noted that our Basic Allowance figure was not the highest or lowest in London but was in the mid-range of provision and was still much lower than the recommended increase set out in the attached IRP report at Appendix 1 of £15,960.
- 2.4 We discussed that going forward, there should be a regularisation of increases to the Basic Allowance to link with the local government pay increase, capped at 2% but noted the legal requirement to consider the Members' Allowance Scheme on an annual basis.
- 2.5 We noted queries about analysis of the Members' Allowance Scheme and the interpretation provided, in the full Council report on the 13th of November 2023, that the allocation of the SRA Band 1B is provided to both the Leader of the Second Opposition Group and Deputy Leader of the Principal Opposition. We noted that an alternative interpretation could be applied, and we were invited to specify whether the scheme should be either the Leader of the Second Opposition Group or Deputy Leader of the Principal Opposition or whether both individuals should receive an allowance. We discussed the following:
- That when this original wording had been added to the Members' Allowance Scheme in 2017/2018, it was prior to the 2018 local elections and when the Standards review of the Members' Allowance Scheme had considered the potential of three political parties being locally elected to take up positions on the Council. We took into account that the second Opposition group had not been elected in the 2022 elections as a political party to provide representation on the Council.
 - The balance of responsibilities and workload of the two opposition groups and that the Principal Opposition group had more members and were responsible for scrutinising the administration.
 - The Principal Opposition held a seat on all ordinary committees of the Council and also held a seat on all scrutiny panels.
- 2.6 We continued to agree that at Table A, Banding group 1B, at bullet point 6, deletion of *Leader of the second Opposition Group or*. This change is reflected at Appendix 2.
- 2.7 We noted that sickness, paternity and maternity leave for Councillors is incorporated in the Members' Allowance scheme. We noted that some work had been done to simplify the process for claiming childcare and carer payments and we agreed to better publicise this form and include it as part of the Council report. This is attached at Appendix 5 for noting.

3. WE RECOMMEND

- 3.1.1 Full Council revoke the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2022/23 as of 31 March 2024.
- 3.1.2 Full Council consider the proposed changes to the Members' Allowance Scheme 2024/2025 set out at **Appendix 3**.
- 3.1.3 Full Council approve the new Members' Allowances Scheme for the Municipal year 2024/25, **as set out in Appendix 4**.
- 3.1.4 Full Council note the updated carers form attached at **Appendix 5**.

4. Changes to Council Standing Orders and Full Council Protocol

- 4.1 On the 5th of March we considered a report on changes to Council Standing Orders and the Full Council Protocol, relating to deletion of the Haringey debate provision, the meeting process for motions, Mayor's communications and having additional oral Council questions to allow wider back bench member involvement in Council meetings. These proposals had been put forward following discussion and steer at the Constitution Working Group.
- 4.2 We agreed with the small update to CSO 8.1(v) to ensure that there was no ambiguity with the rules relating to Council meetings finishing at 10pm. We noted that motions that were not considered could still be put forward to the next meeting, but the onus was still on the political group to put this forward in line with CSO 13 and the sequencing would still need to be in accordance with the Full Council Protocol.
- 4.3 We considered the deletion of the Haringey debate provision from Council Standing Orders and the Protocol and discussed the following:
 - How the debate enabled external speakers and presentation of wider topical issues and allowed the mayor to promote their charity.
 - The debate had been included as a provision in 2011 and the purposes and outcomes were now questioned as there was discussion of the topic at the meetings, but not tangible actions or outcomes proposed following the debates. This situation was not meeting residents, stakeholder expectations. We noted that deleting the debate would allow motions to be reached and this facility can provide tangible resolutions and commitments from the Council.

- We were assured that this process did not exclude local issues from being raised and the deputation's facility still provided the opportunity for public participation.
 - Councillors could proactively speak with local stakeholders and residents to promote deputations to connect with the motions.
 - The need to make the access to Council meetings easier for local people to encourage a wide range of voices at Council meetings. This included Councillors reaching out to local people that had influence and also updating the web pages to make clearer the engagement in meetings process.
- 4.4 We noted that the CWG will next consider process on petitions and deputations at Council meeting and requested a further report in November to understand and comment on the final shape of Full Council meetings.
- 4.5 We noted the changes to the Council Protocol on motion sequencing and mayoral communications and had no specific comments.

WE RECOMMEND

1. That Full Council NOTE the track changes to the Full Council Protocol attached at Appendix 7.
2. That Full Council AGREE the final Full Council Protocol attached at Appendix 8.
3. That Full Council note the resultant changes and additions in yellow to the Council procedure rules set out at Appendix 9
4. That Full Council AGREE the adoption of the final Council Procedure Rules set out at Appendix 10 to take effect from the **close** of the Annual Council meeting on the 20th of May 2024.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Standards Committee Report Members' Allowances Scheme

Appendix 2 Independent Remuneration Panel report 2023

Appendix 3 Members' Allowances Scheme 2024/2025 track changes

Appendix 4 Members' Allowances Scheme 2024/2025 Final

Appendix 5 Updated Carers Form

Appendix 6 Standards Committee Report on Changes to Council Standing Orders and Full Council Protocol

Appendix 7 Track Changes to Full Council Protocol

Appendix 8 Final Full Council Protocol for approval

Appendix 9 Changes to Council Procedure Rules in yellow with deletions and additions included.

Appendix 10 Final Council Procedure Rules for approval