

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**JOINT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

**15 JANUARY 2015**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY & COMMUNICATIONS**

Report prepared by Caroline Matthews

**1. Introduction and Background**

The meeting of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel for Maidstone and Swale Borough Councils has been called for 15 January 2015 following an annual request from Democratic Services Officers to Members of the Council and Parish Councils which asks if they have any issues relating to Members' Allowances that they would like the Panel to consider.

Swale Borough Council have indicated that they do not have any issues themselves and will not be participating at this time.

Therefore the Panel for Maidstone consists of the following members:

Mark Palmer, South East Employers Representative and Chairman  
Athos Loucas, Loucas Chartered Accountants, Representative from  
Chamber of Commerce  
Steve Golding, Maidstone Independent Representative

The Panel will be supported by:

Sandra Marchant, Democratic Services Manager  
Caroline Matthews, Democratic Services Officer

**2. Borough Council Issues Raised for 2015**

There are two issues that the Council would like the Panel to consider:-

Group Leaders Allowance

A Councillor has requested that the Panel consider reverting back to the 2012 Scheme whereby Political Group Leaders of two or more Members would receive an allowance as a proportion of the total number of Councillors (i.e. 55 Councillors). Attached at Appendix 1 is the Scheme as at 1.4.12).

In 2013 the Scheme was changed to:-

Leader of the Opposition (min of 10 Councillors) (receiving 25% of the Leader's Allowance) which equates to £5,831 per annum.

## Appendix A

Group Leaders (min of 5 councillors) (receiving 10% of the Leader's Allowance) which equates to £2,331 per annum.

Attached at Appendix 2 is the Scheme adopted in January 2013.

At the meeting of the Panel in January 2013 it was noted that there was no formal recognition of the role of the Leader of the Opposition and having noted the Job Description, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 3, detailing the role and responsibilities of the Leader of the Opposition, the Panel endorsed the recommendation as set out above.

Immediately prior to May 2014 there were only three main political groups, namely Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and Independents as the Labour Party only had one Member, so that was not constituted as a Group.

Since May 2014 there has been a change to the Political structure of the Council and there are now 5 Political Parties, the composition of which is as follows:-

Conservatives – 24  
Liberal Democrats – 20  
Independent – 5  
UKIP – 4  
Labour – 2

If the Council reverted to the Scheme set out in 2012, there was a stipulation that a Political Group was set at a minimum of 2 members, rather than a minimum of 5 Members as it stands now.

It is proposed that the change would be cost neutral. (Although whilst the Group Leader of the Independent Party is Chair of an Overview & Scrutiny Committee she will not be claiming her special allowance for Group Leader which would be a saving on the budget).

The Councillor has also proposed that whatever percentage the Council staff get in terms of a wage rise, should also be linked into the Members' allowances.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the Panel consider the following options and make a recommendation to Council:-

- a) to agree to revert back to the Scheme as set out in 2012 **(Appendix 1)** whereby Group Leaders (other than the Leader) receive a proportion of the agreed budget based upon how many they have in their party;
- b) to agree a rise on Members Allowances linked to any staff rise in salary on an annual basis;
- c) make no change to the revised Scheme as amended in 2013 **(Appendix 2)** to the Leader of the Opposition and Group Leaders

allowances; or

- d) defer a decision on this until the full review has been carried out by the Panel in April 2015 to take into account the new governance arrangements.

Special Allowance for Vice-Chairmen of Committees

The Licensing Committee and Licensing Act 2003 Committee have recently amalgamated and at their inaugural meeting in September 2014 they asked that the Panel consider a special allowance for Vice-Chairmen of all Committees.

Historically the Council has not given such an allowance to Vice-Chairmen but to assist with your consideration of this proposal, set out below is a brief analysis of what allowances some other Councils in Kent give for Vice-Chairmen, if any:-

**Ashford**

Vice Chairman for Overview & Scrutiny = £1,928.61 (the Chair gets £5,785.82)

Vice Chairman for Audit Committee = £1,607.17 (the Chair gets £4,821.51)

Vice Chairman for Planning = £1,928.61 (the Chair gets £5,785.82)

Vice Chairman of Joint Transportation Board = £1,446.45 (the Chair gets the same)

**Swale**

No special allowances for Vice-Chairmen

**Tunbridge Wells**

Vice Chairman for Planning = £1,320 (the Chair gets £5,500)

**Tonbridge & Malling**

Vice-Chair of Area Planning Committee = £1,269 (the Chair gets £5,076)

Vice-Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee = £1,269 (the Chair gets £5,076)

Vice-Chair of Audit Committee = £635 (the Chair gets £2,538)

Vice-Chair of Licensing & Appeals = £635 (the Chair gets £2,538)

Vice-Chair of Standards & Training = £635 (the Chair gets £2,538)

Vice-Chair of General Purposes Committee = £317 (the Chair gets £1,269)

Vice-Chair of programmed Advisory Board = £317 (the Chair gets £1,269)

Vice-Chair of non-programmed Advisory Board = £127 (the Chair gets £508)

**RECOMMENDED:** That the Panel consider the following options and make a recommendation to Council:-

- a) that the provision of a special allowance for Vice-Chairmen should be made in principle but that the actual costings should be deferred until April 2015 when the Panel meet again to carry out a full review to take account the new governance arrangements and available budget; or
- b) that a special allowance for Vice-Chairmen should not be considered.

**3. Parish Council Issues Raised for 2015**

**Boxley Parish Council**

Boxley Parish Council have requested that you endorse an automatic 1% rise in the Parish Councillor and Chairman's allowances (currently £500 and £610 respectively) to be built into the draft budget for next year which they can opt out of as individuals if they so wish.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the Panel consider this issue and decide if they wish to endorse the proposal.