

Independent Remuneration Panel

Wednesday, 14 November 2007

9.00am

Present:

Ms Jeanett Campbell - Boots
Rev. Michael Fanstone - Baptist Church
Mr David Gingell - Local Resident

Shirley Whatmough Head of Democratic Services
Paul Saunders Principal Accountant

8. Introduction

The Panel considered the messages they had received from the Leaders of the two groups and the implications this could have on the recommendations that they had previously made concerning Chairmen of Policy Overview Committees and Vice-Chairmen generally. They also discussed what they would wish to do about reviewing the basic level of allowance.

The Panel noted that the level of basic allowances paid in Gravesham was below the average for Kent and South East Districts. Both Leaders had acknowledged that councillors do not stand for election for financial benefits and there was some concern amongst Panel members on the effect of increasing allowances on council tax payers. Mr Saunders confirmed that any additional allowances payable would need to be found from other budget heads or reserves.

After some deliberation the Panel confirmed that there were two issues facing them at present - firstly the question of Policy Overview Committee Chairmen's allowances and secondly a general review of basic allowances.

The Panel concluded that they would confirm their previous recommendations concerning the possible introduction of special responsibility allowances for the Chairmen of POCs to be largely funded from savings arising from the reduction in the allowances paid to Vice-Chairmen. In addition, recognising that Gravesham's allowances are lower than others in Kent the Council would be asked to say whether it wished the Panel to undertake a review of this and report back.

The Panel said that if a review was to be undertaken they would wish to be supplied with information concerning the costs of bringing the allowances at Gravesham up to the average paid by other Kent Districts.

The recommendations to the Council were therefore as follows:-

The Council should consider that whether it wished to amend the Members' Allowances Scheme to take account of the following:-

- (1) is the current level of Vice-Chairmen's allowance appropriate when compared with other special responsibility allowances and the amount of work involved?
Consideration could be given to changing the Vice-Chairmen's allowance to a nominal one, of the order of £500 per annum, in recognition of the role;
- (2) in recognition of the work required to be done by the Chairmen of the new Policy Overview Committees, consideration should be given to paying a Special Responsibility Allowance at a lower level than other Chairmen because of the advisory nature of the committees. These new allowances to be funded from the savings made on Vice-Chairmen's allowances.

Given that Gravesham's allowance levels are lower than other allowances paid to Members in Kent and the South East, does the Council wish the Panel to review the overall scheme and report back on proposals for increases in the level of allowances paid?

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.55 am