

## REPORT OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE – 7 DECEMBER 2005

### 1 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

- 1.1 This item of business was referred by the Policy & Finance Committee on 7 December 2005 to Full Council with a recommendation relating to Members' Allowances. A copy of the report to the Committee is attached at Appendix A.
- 1.2 The Committee noted that the recommendation of a Basic Allowance of £3,800 would place Rochford at the average of Essex District and Borough Councils.
- 1.3 The Remuneration Panel appointed for this year were again recommending the inclusion of a Carer's Allowance to facilitate social inclusiveness on the basis that carers should not be penalised or more out of pocket than any other Members.
- 1.4 The Committee also noted that:-
- If a Remuneration Panel recommends involvement in the County Superannuation Scheme, the Authority can decide whether or not to accept the recommendation. The Panel considers this question each year. If there is no Panel recommendation, then non-involvement is binding.
  - In considering an Allowance for Sub-Committee Chairmen, the Panel appreciated that the number/frequency of meetings could vary.
  - Costs associated with a Carer's Allowance would depend on the type of care needed. The Remuneration Panel had concluded that any Allowance would need to be invoice/receipt based, otherwise it becomes taxable and may be detrimental to any benefits. Approximately half of Essex Authorities included a Carer's Allowance within their Schemes. Some made payments on the basis of receipts, others on the basis of receipts with a cap.
  - There is a duty on the Authority to be socially inclusive.
  - Claims for overnight stays in hotels are rare and an increase in the figure to, say, £120 and £180 in Central London would not have budget implications. Any claim would have to be submitted in the context of an approved duty on the basis that the allowance figure is the upper limit.
- 1.5 The Committee agreed that, in respect of the cost of stays in hotels, it was more appropriate to recommend a figure of £120 (£180 in Central London).

- 1.6 With regard to a Carer's Allowance it was observed that there is no statistical way of gauging the costs that could be associated with introducing such an Allowance. There had been significant increases in the Allowances that are currently available to Members over recent years and it is possible that, depending on circumstances, financial support for carers would be available from the Government.
- 1.7 The Committee, therefore, considered that it would not be appropriate to introduce a Carer's Allowance.
- 1.8 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the Member Allowance Scheme comprise:-
- A Basic Allowance of £3,800.
  - The existing cascade system and percentage allocations of Special Responsibility Allowances.
  - The introduction of an Allowance for Chairmen of Sub-Committees.
  - The maintenance of the Co-optees' Allowance at £300 per annum.
  - Travel and subsistence to be paid at the same rate as for officers as at 1 April 2006 subject to a maximum of 40p per mile. The Allowances for a passenger, motorcycle and bicycle to be retained at the same rate.
  - The upper figure for overnight stays in hotels to be £120 (£180 in Central London).
  - That Allowances should not be pensionable.
  - That indexing linking should not be applicable.
- (2) That a Carer's Allowance be not introduced.

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**Background Papers:-**

None

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