

REVIEW OF MEMBERS' EXPENSES

Full Council – 1 October 2013

Report of the: Chief Officer Legal and Governance

Status: For Decision

Also considered by: Governance Committee – 19 September 2013

Key Decision: No

This report supports the Key Aim of Effective Use of Council Resources

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Fleming

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Recommendation to Governance Committee: That Full Council be recommended to approve the changes to Appendix G of the Constitution in relation to Members' Expenses, including the inclusion of Schedule 2 to the Members Allowance Scheme, attached at appendix 1.

Recommendation to Council: That the changes to Appendix G of the Constitution in relation to Members' Expenses, including the inclusion of Schedule 2 to the Members Allowance Scheme, attached at appendix 1 be approved.

Reason for recommendation: to provide additional clarity to Members submitting expense claims.

Introduction

- 1 In relation to reviewing the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme with reference to recommendations from the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (JIRP), this report also reviews the framework for the payment of such allowances set out at Appendix G to the Constitution.

Background

- 2 The framework needs to be reviewed to take account of the new governance arrangements introduced in May 2013.
- 3 In addition, it is the case that members' travel and subsistence claim expenditure has been rising recently and was over-budget in the last financial year.

- 4 The JIRP in October 2012 recommended that consideration be given to align mileage rates with HMRC maximum tax-free allowances rather than the National Joint Council for Local Government Services for pay conditions.
- 5 In order to ensure that claims are fair to all members and are on a consistent basis, the framework has been revised. The intention is to make it much clearer what are approved duties for the payment of expenses. A fundamental change is the including of a table of specific examples, set out at Schedule 2 to the scheme.
- 6 The intention is that this schedule will be updated on an on-going basis for any specific cases not already included. Any arbitration decision required will be made by the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer.
- 7 The wording has also been tightened up around the requirement for receipts, and the need to claim within a three month period.
- 8 The proposed changes are intended to make the scheme much clearer for members, and be more efficient for officers to process.

Key Implications

Financial

- 8 Expenditure on expenses needs to be within budget and the proposed changes should facilitate this process.

Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The proposed decision does not have any adverse effect upon any protected group as identified in the legislation. The proposals improves clarity to Members on what can be claimed in relation to their duties as Councillors.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	Yes	
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		N/A

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Appendix G to the Sevenoaks District Council Constitution.

Mrs Christine Nuttall
Chief Officer Legal and Governance