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Council Meeting

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COUNCIL MEETING

3 MARCH 2022

SUPPLEMENTARY SUMMONS

10. Recommendations from Corporate Management Committee 24 February 2022

Members' Allowances – Report of The Independent Remuneration Panel

To consider the following Minute and recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee held on 24 February 2022. The full agenda report and any associated appendices were circulated with the agenda for that Committee and are available on the website.

The Committee considered the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the scheme of Members' Allowances.

The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended required all local authorities to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel to advise on the terms and conditions of their scheme of Members' Allowances. The Regulations required the Council to have regard to the advice of the Panel when approving a new scheme.

A Panel had been convened to make recommendations on the scheme to be adopted with effect from 1 April 2022, and the Panel had met on three occasions. The Panel consisted of Clare Jones (Education sector representative), Lorna Jamison (Health sector representative and Chair of the Panel), Bob Locker (Residents sector representative) and Suzie Tobin (Voluntary sector representative). No business sector representative could be recruited to the Panel on this occasion despite best efforts to do so.

In formulating its proposals, the Panel had reviewed a range of background information and comparative data and circulated a questionnaire to all Councillors. The questionnaire provided information about the operation of the scheme, Councillors' workloads and Councillors' views about the present arrangements. The Panel had also interviewed all Political Group Leaders and the Chief Executive to discuss the workload and responsibilities of Members and to ascertain if they had any suggestions for improving the current scheme.

The Panel had recommended that the Basic Allowance be increased to £5,500 per annum from 1 April 2022 with any increases to the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)s in 2023/24 and 2024/25 linked to annual staff pay awards. The recommended increase to the Basic Allowance reflected the increased responsibilities and workload, the skills sets now required of a Councillor in a more commercially driven local authority environment including a large services and property portfolio, the requirement to engage in policy development and direction, the need to challenge proposals and assess risks and the pressures associated with communication with constituents in a digital environment. It also acknowledged the overall time commitment of Councillors and addressed the historical deficit of Runnymede's Basic Allowance when compared with other local authorities in Surrey and the South East.

The Panel hoped that the increased Basic Allowance would make the role of Councillor more viable for persons of working age and those who had family commitments. The Panel also considered that it better recognised the social value of the role performed by Councillors and hopefully encouraged greater diversity in membership which would be more representative of the community the Council served. The Panel agreed that the current arrangement under which 50% of the time of Councillors was not remunerated should

continue in order to retain the public service element of being a Councillor at an appropriate level.

The Panel had assessed the SRA paid to Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and considered whether this sufficiently reflected the increasing workload and responsibility associated with those offices. The SRAs for Leader and Deputy Leader were low in comparison with other Authorities in Surrey and the South East. The Panel therefore recommended that the SRA for Leader of the Council be increased from £10,368 to £11,000 with the SRA for Deputy Leader being 50% of that, namely an increase from £2,592 to £5,500. The Panel considered this an appropriate increase which better reflected the workload and responsibilities associated with these high profile roles, would assist succession planning to those offices, and be more in line with SRAs paid in other local authorities for these roles.

The Panel had reviewed the restriction placed on Members who served on Corporate Management Committee. Currently a Councillor could only receive a SRA of £1,296 for being a member of Corporate Management Committee if he or she was not entitled to any other SRA. The Corporate Management Committee currently had 12 Members. At the current time, only 2 councillors were eligible for the Special Allowance for serving on that Committee and the remaining 10 Councillors did not get a SRA as they received an SRA for holding other offices. The Panel acknowledged the increased workload and responsibilities involved in serving on this Committee and considered that the restriction should be removed and that all Members of that Committee should be paid an SRA of £1,296 regardless of any other offices that they held.

The Panel had reviewed the SRAs for Chairman and Vice- Chairman of Standards and Audit Committee which were low compared to SRAs paid to other Chairmen. In addition, since the last review 3 years ago, the Committee had taken an increased role for the oversight of the governance and financial operation of the Council. On this basis the Panel considered that the SRA for Chairman and Vice Chairman of this Committee should be increased from £1,710 to £5,184 and from £648 to £2,592 respectively which was in line with SRAs paid to the Chairmen and Vice- Chairmen of main Committees. It was noted that Surrey County Council would determine any level of allowances received by Members in connection with the Runnymede Joint Committee.

Regarding the SRA paid to Political Group Leaders other than Leader of the Council, the Panel knew from its research that a small number of local authorities paid Political Group Leaders a flat rate plus a payment per member in their group or just a payment based on number of members in their groups. The Panel considered that the current SRA of £3,888 for Political Group Leaders was too high and that it was fairer for the SRA to be based on number of members in a group and recommended a figure of £425 per member which was consistent with the SRA paid to the Leader of the Council if a per head basis calculation was applied. The Panel considered whether an SRA should be paid to those Councillors who led particular projects but were advised this was not legally permissible.

The Panel did not recommend any other changes to the amounts and types of SRAs which included retaining the current arrangement where no Councillor was paid more than two SRAs. The full cost of adopting all these changes was estimated to be £65,000 per annum. As a provision of £16,000 had already been made in the 2022/23 Estimates, a further annual sum of £49,000 was required. If the Council accepted the recommendations of the Panel, the costs for the following three years would be as follows:

	Original Estimate 2021/22 £	Probable 2021/22 £	Original Estimate 2022/23 £	Proposed Estimate 2023/24 £	Proposed Estimate 2023/24 £	Proposed Estimate 2024/25 £
Members' Allowances						
Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances, incl Mayor and deputy	319,800	319,800	335,800	384,800	384,800	384,800
Members' training expenses, travel and subsistence	8,200	8,200	8,200	8,200	8,200	8,200

The Council had to have regard to the recommendations of the Panel when determining its scheme of Members' Allowances and decide whether it wished to accept the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel in their entirety or, if not, what changes it would wish to approve. The Committee asked that its thanks be passed on to the Members of the Panel for the diligent work that the Panel had done in putting forward the recommendations.

The Committee supported all of the Panel's recommendations. The increase to the Basic Allowance reflected the time and effort required to be expended by Councillors at Runnymede which was a local authority which had its own Direct Services Organisation and housing stock and had large Commercial Services and Community Services functions.

All Members apart from the serving Mayor currently received an allowance of £1,000 for serving on a Member Working Party (MWP). This was an allowance received by Members which was separate from the Members' Allowances Scheme. Some Members of the Committee asked whether this MWP allowance would be continued. The Committee agreed that as it was recommending an increase in the Basic Allowance and in the amounts that some Councillors would receive for SRAs it would not be appropriate to continue to receive a MWP allowance. The Committee accordingly agreed to recommend as set out in recommendation vi) below. It was agreed that a Member would be advised where Runnymede would appear in the Basic Allowance list of local authorities in Surrey if Members were to receive £6,500 per annum (consisting of a Basic Allowance of £5,500 plus a £1,000 MWP allowance).

Recommend to Full Council on 3 March 2022 that –

- i) the Council notes the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel following the Panel's review of the scheme of Members' Allowances;**
- ii) the Council notes that the Panel recommends that**
 - a) the Basic Allowance be set at £5,500 per annum;**
 - b) annual increases linked to annual staff pay awards be applied to the Basic Allowance and SRAs in the financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25;**

- c) **the SRA for Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council be increased to £11,000 and £5,500 respectively;**
 - d) **the SRA of £1,296 for serving on Corporate Management Committee be paid to all Members of that Committee regardless of any SRAs they receive for holding other offices;**
 - e) **the SRA for Political Group Leaders, other than Leader of the Council, be based on £425 per Member of their respective Groups;**
 - f) **that no other changes be made to the scheme of Members' Allowances;**
- iii) **the Committee recommends that the Panel's recommendations be accepted;**
 - iv) **subject to the Council accepting the Committee's recommendation, the Members' Allowances Scheme set out at Annex '2' to the Panel's report, be adopted with effect from 1 April 2022;**
 - v) **subject to the Council accepting the Committee's recommendation, a supplementary revenue estimate be approved in the sum of £49,000 to cover the increased costs of the scheme in 2022/23 and subsequent years' increases be added to the Medium Term Financial Strategy; and**
 - vi) **the annual allowance of £1,000 received by all Members apart from the serving Mayor for serving on a Member Working Party, which is an allowance received by Members which is separate from the Members' Allowances Scheme, be discontinued for 2022/23.**

Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23

To consider the following Minute and recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee held on 24 February 2022. The full agenda report and any associated appendices were circulated with the agenda for that Committee and are available on the website.

The Committee considered a report recommending that the Committee recommend to Full Council that the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23 to be implemented from 1 April 2022 should continue in its current form with no changes other than statutory changes and uprating. This Scheme applied to those of working age only. Pensioners, subject to their income, could receive up to 100 per cent support towards their Council Tax and the Council had no power to change the level of support provided to pensioners.

The Government had announced Regulations uprating various amounts which had to be included in the pension age Scheme and be adopted by Runnymede for the working age Council Tax support scheme for 2022/23. The details of the Regulations were noted by the Committee. They included changes to non-dependant deductions, applicable amounts, premiums, income and capital disregards and the habitual residence test. In addition, the Government had announced, on 3 February 2022, that it would provide funding for billing authorities to give all households in England whose primary residence was valued in Council Tax bands A-D a one-off Council tax energy rebate payment of £150. The Government would lay regulations to require these payments to be disregarded as income for the purposes of calculating eligibility for Council Tax support.

At its meeting on 12 February 2019, Full Council had agreed a Council Tax Support Scheme to be implemented from 1 April 2019. At its meeting on 24 September 2020, the

Corporate Management Committee considered a report reviewing the Scheme and decided to keep the Scheme unchanged and create a £50,000 discretionary hardship fund. The Corporate Management Committee had agreed at that meeting that the discretionary hardship fund would commence in April 2021 and would be administered over two years and would be used to help those most in need due to the economic impact of coronavirus but were excluded from Council Tax Support or were receiving less than their full liability. It was agreed at that meeting that the Council would review the Council Tax Support Scheme and the discretionary hardship fund in two years' time.

Officers would be considering options for a full scale review of Runnymede's Council Tax Support Scheme during 2022. This was to ensure that the Scheme incorporated the roll out of Universal Credit and to take the opportunity to simplify the administration of claims and make it easier for the Council's most vulnerable residents to understand how their financial assistance had been calculated and what help those of working age were entitled to with their Council Tax. Any changes would come into effect from April 2023.

As the Scheme had been in its current form since April 2019, proposals for a full scale review of the Scheme would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee, so that the Council's decision on the Scheme for 2023/24 could be informed by the findings of that review. A Member suggested that any proposals for a full scale review of the Scheme should be considered first by the Housing Committee as that Committee's functions included Housing and Council Tax benefits. However, the Committee was advised that this was a support scheme not a benefits scheme and support schemes did not fall within the Housing Committee's functions. The Committee indicated that before it considered proposals for a full scale review the proposals should be discussed in another meeting first and sought advice from officers outside the meeting on whether this should be the Housing Committee or one of the Member Working Parties.

One of the elements of the current Scheme was that Council Tax Support entitlement calculated at less than £10.00 per week was not paid except for those classed as vulnerable and the previous level of £5.00 per week was maintained. Some Members of the Committee considered that this element of the Scheme should be looked at again as part of the full scale review and either did not support this element of the scheme or indicated that they would wish to have details of how vulnerability was determined in this context when the Scheme was reviewed.

As the Corporate Management Committee on 24 September 2020 had decided to maintain the Scheme in its current form until April 2023, the Committee recommended that the Scheme be kept in its current form and updated according to Regulations set out in the Statutory Instrument SI 25/2022 issued by the Government and the Housing Benefit uprating circular A11/2022.

Recommend to Full Council on 3 March 2022 that –

the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23 to be implemented from 1 April 2022 continues in its current form with no changes other than statutory changes and uprating.

Annual Pay Policy Statement - 2022/2023

To consider the following Minute and recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee held on 24 February 2022. The full agenda report and any associated appendices were circulated with the agenda for that Committee and are available on the website.

The Committee considered a report on the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 and the 2022/23 Pay Policy Statement which was appended to the agenda report. This Statement was required by the Localism Act 2011. The Statement had to set out the Council's policies

towards a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce and had to be published on the Council's website by 31 March 2022. Pay Policy Statements had to be prepared each financial year and had to be approved by Full Council. The Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 would therefore be approved by Full Council on 3 March 2022.

Pay Policy Statements were intended to ensure that policies in relation to the pay and reward of the most senior staff were set out clearly in the context of the pay of the wider workforce and these relationships were set out as a series of ratios. The ratio between the lowest and the highest paid salary in Runnymede was 1:5.475, a reduction from last year's ratio of 1:7.85. Other ratios in the Statement had also reduced as a result of a number of highly paid senior members of staff leaving the Council. The current full-time salary ranges for Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer posts as defined under the Localism Act 2011 were noted. The Council's overall policies on pay had not altered since last year's Pay Policy Statement.

The introduction of the National Living Wage on 1 April 2016 had had the effect of eroding away Scale 1 and Scale 2 of the pay structure. The National Living Wage for those aged 23 years and over would rise from £8.91 per hour to £9.50 per hour from 6 April 2022. This meant that Grade 3 on the pay structure ceased to exist and moved all those on Grade 3 up to the minimum of Grade 4. The effect of this rise would be to increase the base annual salary of 14 permanent and 52 casual employees to the new level of the National Living Wage. It was noted that Runnymede paid all staff according to their Grade regardless of the age of those staff and did not pay any staff less than the level of the National Living Wage.

Recommend to Full Council on 3 March 2022 that –

the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23, as reported, be approved.

11. Urgent Notice of Motion – Situation in Ukraine

The Mayor has given her consent to the Motion below being dealt with as a matter of urgency.

Cllr Gillham will move the following Motion:

Runnymede Borough Council expresses its support for the Declaration made by the Bureau of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on the situation in Ukraine as set out below:

The Bureau of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities the Council of Europe, held an extraordinary meeting on 28 February 2022 and adopted the following Declaration:

The Bureau,

1. condemns in the strongest terms, the armed attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation, which constitutes a blatant breach of international law and the Statute of the Council of Europe;
2. urges the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally cease its military operations in Ukraine and withdraw its troops;
3. deplores loss of life, human suffering and destruction caused by the Russian aggression and expresses its support to Ukraine and its solidarity with its people;
4. condemns the recognition by the Russian Federation of the Ukrainian oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent entities and the previous annexation of Crimea;
5. expresses its unwavering commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders;
6. underlines the fundamental role of the Council of Europe, as an organisation founded in the aftermath of the Second World War, to defend human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe, and ensure the peaceful coexistence of nations in Europe;
7. recalls, in this respect, that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress;
8. stresses that the armed attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation constitutes an attack on the principles and values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law which the Council of Europe stands for, promotes and defends; and that this war makes it impossible for local authorities in Ukraine to operate and inflicts serious suffering on the Ukrainian people;
9. underlines the role of the Congress in contributing to the aim and objectives of the Council of Europe and in building up local and regional democracy, the values of which are deeply rooted in the Ukrainian nation, identity and institutions;
10. calls for the Russian Federation to respect its obligations under the Statute and under international law;
11. considers that it is impossible to co-operate with the Russian delegation in the Congress until the territorial integrity of Ukraine is restored;
12. welcomes the Committee of Ministers' decision of 25 February 2022 to suspend the Russian Federation from its rights of representation in the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 8 of the Statute of the Council of Europe and calls on the Committee of Ministers to take the necessary additional decisions as soon as possible so that the suspension also applies to the Congress;

The Bureau stresses that democracy, multilevel governance and human rights are stronger than war, stands firmly by Ukraine and its people, and calls on all local and regional communities of Europe, and beyond, to stay united and determined in their solidarity with the Ukrainian nation, its people and its authorities.