

**Runnymede Council Residents' Association – Chairman's Allowance (Law & Governance, Andrew Finch)**

**Synopsis of report:**

**To approve the ongoing payment of an allowance to the Chair of the Runnymede Council Residents' Association (RCRA).**

**Recommendations:**

- i) the Committee approves the continued remuneration of £2,072 per annum to the Chair of the RCRA to be met from existing HRA budgets, (subject to an equivalent percentage increase, as from 1 April 2022, to reflect any uplift in the Members' Basic Allowance rate); and**
- ii) the Chair of the RCRA's travel expenses be paid in respect of those travel costs associated with meetings taking place both inside and outside the Borough.**

**1. Context of report**

1.1 The RCRA have been in existence since the Stock Options Appraisal exercise, formed from an amalgamation of the old Tenants' Service Group and the then newly formed group of residents that took part in the stock options consultation.

1.2 The RCRA have a formal constitution and appointed Officers, including a Chairman. Mrs Jenny Hill has been the Chair of the RCRA since its inception, and has worked tirelessly in promoting residents' views on all matters of Council policy and procedures. As the Chair of the RCRA she –

- i) attends meetings of the Housing Committee and Housing and Enabling Member Working Party,
- ii) organises and attends all meetings of the RCRA,
- iii) is the Chair of the Tenants Committee of the Association of Retained Council Housing,
- iv) has taken an active role in helping to select contractors for major contracts and staff for key posts,
- v) has organised responses to Government consultations aimed at tenants and attended seminars on such issues,
- vi) has supported other residents' groups by providing advice and information.
- Vii) works with the Housing Management Team to represent Tenant's views and aspirations.
- Viii) has taken an active role in succession planning and trying to encourage as many residents to join the RCRA as possible.

- 1.3 Mrs Hill is currently remunerated in the sum of £2,072 per annum (equating to 50% of the current Members' Basic Allowance of £4,143) plus her travel expenses in respect of those travel costs associated with meetings taking place both inside and outside the Borough. It has been the practice to review the level of payment to the RCRA Chairperson each year at the January meeting of the Committee in order to tie in with consideration of the annual HRA Estimates. The level of payment would also be subject to review if the Chairperson changed to reflect the particular duties undertaken by that person.
- 1.4 The Committee is recommended to consider that, if Members' Basic Allowance increases by RPI on 1 April 2022 or any other increase approved by full Council following consideration of the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), a similar percentage increase should similarly apply to Mrs Hill's remuneration, from the same date, to maintain the current status quo.

## 2. **Report**

- 2.1 For many years the Government have encouraged local authority landlords to involve their tenants in the delivery of services. The RCRA will continue to take a key role in taking this work forward.
- 2.2 Within the HRA are budgets to assist Officers to develop resident involvement. These budgets help support individual groups, pay for printing of the residents' biannual newsletter, and generally pay for any items that support and develop participation and involvement of RBC tenants and leaseholders.
- 2.3 It is proposed that in 2022/23, if the Members' Basic Allowance increases in April 2022 the RCRA Chair's Allowance should increase by the same percentage plus her travel expenses in respect of those travel costs associated with meetings taking place both inside and outside the Borough.
- 2.4 If this suggestion is approved, the cost would be borne by the Tenant Participation budget within the HRA.
- 2.5 As the number of policies and strategies considered by the Housing Committee has significantly increased over the past 12 months, Mrs Hill's input on behalf of residents has increased in this area.
- 2.6 Mrs Hill has devoted a significant amount of time to revamping the RCRA's social media presence in recent months, and a private Facebook group for RCRA residents is set to go live in January 2022.

## 3. **Legal implications**

- 3.1 Until May 2003, the Tenant's representative was a co-opted non-voting member of the Committee but Council then determined that the representative could best fulfil the role as an invitee without the need for formal co-option. In December 2019 in recognition of the contribution of Mrs Hill, Full Council agreed that Mrs Hill be appointed as a co-opted non-voting member for the purposes affecting housing tenants. Her presence for

confidential items pertaining to Housing on Part 2 of the Committee agenda was approved.

3.2 Paying this modest remuneration is in line with Government's policy for tenant participation and is permitted expenditure on the HRA budget.

4. **Equalities**

4.1 Officers are of the opinion that there are no specific equality issues relating to this item.

5. **Conclusions**

5.1 The current Chair devotes a large amount of her time in working with Officers to develop and provide opportunities for residents to become involved both in the management of their housing and in making choices over the services provided. This is a significant workload, and Officers feel that there is a continuing need for the present workload and future involvement to be formally recognised by the payment of an agreed allowance to Mrs Hill, the current Chairman, plus payment of her travel costs associated with meetings taking place both inside and outside the Borough. Mindful of the relationship of equating the Chair's remuneration to 50% of Members' Basic Allowance, Officers therefore propose to increase the Chair's remuneration by the same percentage increase as Members' Basic Allowance during 2022/23.

**(To resolve)**

**Background papers**

None