

## Wiltshire Council

### Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

14 March 2014

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#### Overview and Scrutiny Councillor Remuneration 2013/14

##### Purpose

- 1 To report the decision of Council on recommendation by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in respect of the overview and scrutiny (OS) fund within the Councillors' Allowances Scheme.
- 2 To provide an opportunity for the Management Committee to give guidance to the Chairman over the allocation of this fund for 2013/14 in light of the views expressed by the IRP.

##### Background

- 3 The IRP undertakes periodic review of the Councillors' Allowances Scheme and makes recommendation to Council over changes, developments and rates within certain prescribed limits. Its latest review was undertaken in November 2013.
- 4 Within the Scheme a fund is available for retrospective annual disposal by the Chairman of the OS Management Committee to reward councillor engagement in the OS function. As in the past, the Chairman is keen to gain the views of the Management Committee before finalising a scheme for allocation at the end of the municipal year in May.
- 5 The views expressed by the Committee last year are appended in the form of a minute extract for information. The Committee will note that it felt *"the Scrutiny remuneration fund should be reviewed over the next twelve months so that genuine commitment to Task Groups is rewarded in the most appropriate way."* This report now provides that opportunity.

##### IRP Report

- 6 The following is an extract from the latest IRP report in respect of the OS fund, the recommendation from which was adopted (as amended) by Council in November last year. The key drivers for change have been underlined for the benefit of the Committee.

*"111. The current Scheme provides for a lump sum of £10,000 to be allocated to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for distribution to "those members performing specific scrutiny functions, the aim of which is to widen and increase the engagement of non-executive members in the decision making process" (wording taken from the Panel's original recommendation in 2006). This fund was allocated in response to*

representations regarding the difficulty in getting Councillors to serve on scrutiny task groups and perform other scrutiny duties. It was hoped that it would encourage more Councillors to become engaged in challenging the Cabinet (with all the democratic benefits that this would bring) as well as helping to provide some balance in the amount of allowances allocated between the majority and non-majority groups. It would also recognise exceptional work and time commitment carried out in the scrutiny arena.

112. In 2007, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee agreed a method of distributing this money whereby service on scrutiny activities was to be reflected as a share of the Chairman's allocation of funds. The allocation was divided by the number of shares and distributed to members who had attended over 50% of available meetings of any scrutiny committee, task group or project board etc. The allocation of the fund in this way had also become bureaucratic and onerous for officers to administer.

113. The Panel were disappointed to learn that the fund had continued to be used in the way described, although the Panel acknowledged that the rationale followed did attempt to reward the work of those councillors contributing greater effort, nevertheless it could be regarded as an attendance allowance for scrutiny committee members. The Leader also expressed dissatisfaction with this practice, which is anomalous within the Scheme as no other committee members are paid merely for their attendance at committee meetings. The Panel had intended the fund to be used to remunerate Councillors performing specific scrutiny functions such as charring task groups and for rewarding exceptional scrutiny performance.

114. On speaking to the new Chairman of the Management Committee, it was clear that he had reservations regarding the way this pot had been used in the past and would prefer it to be linked to performance and outcomes rather than simply allocated by a share system which had become divisive. Having discussed this issue the Panel was satisfied that changes could be made to the system to bring the allocation more in line with its original intention. The Panel does believe that the fund can serve a valuable purpose in remunerating Councillors who play a significant role in scrutiny activities such as task groups, rapid scrutiny exercises and acting as Chairmen of Select Committees. It therefore recommends that the fund is retained within the Scheme and increased to £15k.

115. The Panel reiterates that the fund is intended to reward councillors performing specific scrutiny functions such as charring task groups and rapid scrutiny exercises and acting as Vice Chairmen of Select Committees. Choosing the precise method of allocation remains in the gift of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

The Panel recommend that:

(a) The scrutiny fund, which is intended to reward Councillors performing specific scrutiny functions such as charring task groups and rapid scrutiny

*exercises and acting as Vice Chairman of Select Committees, is retained within the Scheme and is increased to £15,000.*

*(b) The fund is to be allocated, as appropriate (in accordance with a scheme to be prepared by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee; such a scheme to be approved by that committee before it is implemented,) by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.*

- 7 The Management Committee needs to also be aware that Special Responsibilities Allowances (SRA) are paid to councillors holding the following positions in OS for 2013/14:

Chairman of Management Committee	£10,753
Vice-Chairman of Management Committee	£6,912
Chairmen of Select Committees (x 3)	£6,912

## **Conclusion**

- 8 Quite clearly the Management Committee itself from last year, the Leader, the current Chairman of the Management Committee, the IRP and Council feel that how the fund is allocated needs changing to better target key positions (not catered for by an SRA). By reducing the number of people qualifying and by increasing the size of the fund then a greater incentive will exist for key councillors to achieve exceptional scrutiny performance.
- 9 The Management Committee armed with the views of the IRP now have an opportunity to give its views on how it may wish to see changes to the current arrangements in the form of guidance to the Chairman.
- 10 Once determined, the Chairman will inform all non-executive councillors of the approach to allocating the £15,000 fund at year end.

**Paul Kelly**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Manager (and designated Scrutiny Officer)**  
**Corporate Office**