

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting held: 4th April 2018

Present: Councillor Duncan Bain (Chair)

Councillors Ash Davies, Jim Hakewill, Paul Marks and Mick Scrimshaw

Also Present: Martin Hammond (Executive Director)
Helen Edwards (Head of Democratic and Legal Services)
David Pope (Committee Administrator)

17.RD.27 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cedwien Brown, Jenny Henson and Greg Titcombe. It was noted that Cllr Davies would be acting as substitute for Cllr Cedwien Brown, with Cllr Marks acting as substitute for Cllr Titcombe.

17.RD.28 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Research and Development Committee held on 7th February 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

17.RD.29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

17.RD.30 REPORT OF INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL – MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES: ADOPTION OF A NEW SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES (A1)

A report was submitted which requested the Committee consider the findings of the Independent Review Panel (IRP) in relation to a reviewed scheme of Members' Allowances and to refer their comments to the Executive Committee for consideration on the 18th April, prior to Council making a final decision on 25th April.

It was heard that the existing scheme had been approved in April 2012 and it was therefore timely to undertake a review. The Council was required to adopt a scheme that adequately supported councillors in fulfilling Council priorities and provided the best opportunity possible for those residents seeking election to serve. It was noted that government regulations required the Council to establish and maintain an IRP and have regard to its advice, although there was no requirement to accept its recommendations.

In addition, Members noted the comments from the Standards Advisory Committee held in October 2017 who were mindful of the need to effect a balance between austerity and a scheme that adequately compensated members for their time and input and would attract more people to put themselves forward as prospective candidates.

The report requested that the Committee consider two elements reviewed by the IRP. The first recommendation was a 2% increase to the basic Members' Allowance which would provide parity with officer pay increases.

The Committee was also asked to consider the Ward Initiative Fund (WIF), that although not technically part of the IRP remit, had been included as part of their considerations. Two options had been recommended, the first would see an increase in individual member WIF allocation from £625 per annum to £1000. The second option was for individual allocations to remain at £625 annually, with the additional resources proposed to be pooled centrally allowing for members to bid for additional WIF.

Members considered the issue of WIF at length and recommended that:-

- Individual councillor WIF allocations to be increased to £1000 annually, with no central pool.
- The WIF not be included in the Member Allowances review going forward

Furthermore, it was considered that it might be useful to review WIF restrictions on expenditure as a future agenda item.

In relation to Member Allowances, the Committee considered that it should recommend that these be frozen at current levels given the current circumstances of austerity.

RESOLVED

that the following comments be referred to the Executive Committee on 18th April and the subsequent Council meeting on 25th April:-

- Individual councillor Ward Initiative Fund allocations to be increased to £1000 annually, with no central pool.
- The Ward Initiative Fund not be included in the Member Allowances review going forward
- That Member Allowances be frozen at 2017/18 levels.

17.MA.31 WORK PROGRAMME (A2)

The Committee's work programme was submitted for consideration. The following items would be added for consideration at the next meeting:-

- Car Parking Charges strategy
- Unitary Authority Considerations
- Ward Initiative Fund – Spending Restrictions

Members indicated that they wished to establish a Task and Finish Group, comprising the full membership of the committee, to explore various aspects of the proposals to create unitary authorities within Northamptonshire.

It was noted that at this stage, very little clarity existed about what these proposals involved, the likely timescales that would apply, or the issues which could be sensibly explored locally compared to across a wider geography than the Borough. Members requested that a draft terms of reference for a Task and Finish Group be prepared for agreement at the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group, and that a Members Information Evening for all members on the subject should be organised as soon as sensibly possible to share information about the proposals.

(The meeting started at 7.00pm and ended at 8.25pm)

Signed:

(Chair)

DJP