

Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

To: Corporate, Policy and Resources Committee

Special Responsibility Allowances

Date 19/01/2016

For Decision

1.0 Reporting to Corporate, Policy and Resources Committee

Linkage to Corporate Plan	
Strategic Priority	Governance
Objective	Update of Scheme of Allowances
Lead Officer	David Wright
Cost: (If applicable)	£62,460

1.1 Background

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has established a scheme of allowances payable to Members for the current period. The scheme provides for the payment of allowances to Councillors on the basis that:

- 1 – The maximum level of basic allowance as determined by the Department of the Environment (DoE) is paid
- 2 – The maximum level of carers allowances as determined by the DoE are paid
- 3 – The maximum level of mileage rates as determined by the DoE are paid
- 4 – Councillors' payments are made on the third last banking day of each month

At the meeting of this committee on 20th October 2015 it was proposed that a sub-committee be set-up to consider the level and recipients of Special Responsibility Allowance.

1.2 Minutes of Sub-committee meeting on 14th December 2015

In attendance: Alderman Cole
Alderman Finlay
Alderman Hickey
Alderman McKeown
Councillor Baird
Councillor Chivers
Chief Finance Officer

The Chief Finance Officer outlined the terms of reference of the meeting as follows:

To consider the allocation of Special Responsibility Allowance for 2016/17 taking into account whether or not all members of the Planning Committee should be in receipt.

The discussion began with agreement that the position of Mayor was being underpaid adding that the current level of payment to the position could be counter-productive especially for younger members of Council who could feel put off taking on the role as they may end up being at a financial loss due to the workload and time commitment required. The sum of £12,000 per annum was agreed.

Turning to the planning committee there was a slight difference of opinion as to whether there should be a payment to all members of this committee. It was eventually agreed that there should considering the increased time commitment in comparison to other committees with site meeting commencing at 10am, continuing through most of the early part of the day and then the meeting proper itself. The consensus was that the membership of this committee did not lend itself to those with full time employment since taking a day off their normal employment was not an option for many councillors. Members also agreed that since this committee has full council powers there rests with the members an added responsibility. The level of SRA for a Planning committee member is recommended at £1200 per annum.

Members next discussed the matter of limiting the number of recipients of SRA, currently this could be a maximum of 25 if Planning Committee members are to be included, regulations allows 20 (50% of total council members). It was agreed that Committee Vice-Chairs would be removed from the scheme of allowances thereby reducing the number of recipients by 5 but with the Planning Vice-chair now receiving a standard committee member's allowance tis put the total back up to 21. It was further suggested that the scheme make allowance for a prolonged absence of for example a committee chair i.e.: more than a calendar month so that the allowance for that period can be transferred to the vice chair.

Some further discussion centered on the regulatory limit regarding the maximum number of recipients. The Chief Finance Officer informed members that Councils may apply to exceed this limit stating their reasons for doing so but also informed members that he had made enquiries about this, to date no council has made an application to exceed the 50% limit under the new 11 council regime, there had been a few successful applications under the former 26 council model. He continued to point out to members that when the enquiry was made DoE made the following statement in their response, this being a reference to the remunerations panel's determination on the setting of the members basic allowance for the new 11 council regime;

You will be aware that the previous Environment Minister appointed an Independent Remuneration Panel in May 2013 to conduct a review of all councillors' allowances. The Panel when making its recommendations on the new rates was asked to take into consideration the full range of new duties that councillors were to undertake from 2015/2016; this included the new planning responsibilities. The Report of the Panel, dated 1 November 2013, recommended that the basic allowance from 1 April 2015 should be increased considerably to take account of the new duties for all councillors.

In light of this it was felt that an application to the department on this basis could not be guaranteed success therefore a suggestion was made to allow Council to remain within the 50% limit, currently the Partnership Panel representative is also a member of the Planning

Committee therefore if this was a standing arrangement the maximum number of recipients of SRA would be 20 and therefore compliant.

Finally it was agreed that in light of the Mayor's increased allocation that the Deputy Mayor receive an additional £1,000

1.3 Recommendations

It is recommended that;

- 1 Mayor's allowance be increased to £12,000 per annum with immediate effect
- 2 Planning committee members receive £1,200 per annum with effect from 1 April 2016
- 3 Committee vice-chairs be removed from the SRA allocations
- 4 Partnership panel representative always be a member of the planning committee
- 5 Deputy Mayor's allowance be increased by £1,000 per annum with immediate effect