

**Report of the Director of Legal and Governance
to Council on the 30th March, 2017**

Community Cohesion Champion Special Responsibility Allowance

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To consider the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel which has examined the case for the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance to the role of Community Cohesion Champion.
- 1.2 To consider any appropriate changes to the Scheme of Allowances arising from the recommendations of the Panel.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel be noted and, in the light of the findings of the Panel and its recommendations, an amendment to be made to the Council's Scheme of Allowances to provide for the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance for the role of Community Cohesion Champion.

3. Background

- 3.1 The role of Community Cohesion Champion was formally established in March 2016. The role was established to take effect from the start of the municipal year 2015/16 given that the role was being discharged on a de facto basis albeit informally for the previous 12 months. An appropriate role description was also approved.
- 3.2 At the time the role was established formally it was recognised that the question of whether or not the position should be subject to a Special Responsibility Allowance would need to be referred for consideration by the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel.
- 3.3 The Panel has considered appropriate evidence and interviewed of relevant witnesses and submitted its report formally in December 2016. A copy of the report of the Panel is attached as an Appendix B.
- 3.4 The relevant regulations relating to the payment of members allowances provide that no change may be made to the Council's Scheme of Allowances unless a report has been considered from its Independent Remuneration Panel. The Council is not bound in considering the report to follow any recommendations made by the Panel but it must give good reason for any decision which does not follow the recommended approach of the Panel.

4. Current position and consideration of issue.

- 4.1 The report of the Panel is therefore now required to be considered formally through the Council's decision-making process.
- 4.2 The Council will note that the Panel has made a recommendation that the position of Community Cohesion Champion should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance. The Panel was satisfied from the evidence which it heard from relevant officers, the Cabinet

Spokesperson for Communities, the postholder, and from the Leader of the Council that the nature of the responsibility and workload involved was such to support payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance.

Rationale

4.3 The following passages from the Panel report are of particular relevance:

11. *"It is not for the Panel to comment on the validity of the role of Community Cohesion Champion; that is a function reserved to the Leader and the Council. The principal question for the Panel is whether the workload and responsibility of the post merits an SRA. Does the role carry an additional significance "both in terms of responsibility and real time commitment"¹ beyond that carried out by ward Members for which the Basic Allowance is paid?"*

¹[See paragraph 72 of 2006 statutory guidance]

12. *The Panel has always been clear that the Basic Allowance (£10,665) includes such duties as representation, community leadership, internal governance and standards. However, the Community Cohesion Champion brings an additional, Borough-wide, dimension to these roles. The Community Cohesion Champion meets regularly with members of community groups, relevant council officers and partnership bodies in their liaison role. In this way the Community Cohesion Champion acts as the co-coordinator and clearing house for problems to get addressed. It cuts across cultural and local agendas which are not suitable for ward-based approaches.*
13. *In addition, the intelligence role has become larger than envisaged. This mainly involves identifying problems that previously had not been apparent, e.g., revealing tensions both between different community groups and within community groups. A concrete example quoted was where asylum seekers from the same country and religious background were being housed together. The Community Cohesion Champion identified sectional differences in the apparently same religious affiliation that was causing tensions and an intervention was made to remedy the situation before sectional tensions developed into conflict.*

4.4 The Panel also explored the relationship between the position of Community Cohesion Champion and the role of the Cabinet Spokesperson for Communities.

15. *"The Panel is satisfied that the role and responsibility of the Community Cohesion Champion is in addition to that of the Communities Portfolio Holder and Support Member rather than a wider sharing of those responsibilities. The Community Cohesion Champion is addressing an area that was simply not present to the same extent 6-7 years ago and in turn has identified areas that were not anticipated. As such the Panel is clear that the workload and responsibility carried by the Community Cohesion Champion is significant to merit an SRA."*

Level of Allowance

4.5 Having established the rationale for the payment of an allowance consistent with the principles contained in the relevant regulations and statutory guidance in respect of Special Responsibility Allowances the Panel then examined what would be an appropriate amount for an allowance by way of remuneration.

4.6 The Panel considered with reference to other positions within the Scheme of Allowances that the position of Community Cohesion Champion could be viewed as falling between that of a Cabinet Support Member and that of a Scrutiny Task and Finish Lead.

4.7 In arriving at a precise figure it will be noted that the Panel adopted a similar approach as has been applied to existing Special Responsibility Allowances within the Scheme whereby the appropriate level of allowance has been expressed as a percentage of the Leader's overall SRA. The Panel considered on this basis that the nature of the responsibility for the position should be reflected as 10% of the Leader's SRA and recommended that the allowance should be £2,568.00

Implementation

4.8 The Panel also recognised that the role of Community Cohesion Champion had been established officially since March 2016 and so it would be appropriate to recommend that the payment of the allowance to the position holder should be backdated to the beginning of the financial year 2016/17. This backdating is permitted by the regulations.

5. Financial Implications

The financial implications are shown in the attached Appendix A and can be accommodated within the overall budget for Members Allowances.

6. Proposal

That the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel be noted and that Council consider amending the Council's Scheme of Allowances to provide for the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance for the role of Community Cohesion Champion.

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Background Papers

Report to the