

## **Proposed terms of reference for the Independent Remuneration Panel**

### **1. The work of the panel**

- 1.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel is convened to make recommendations to West Suffolk Council on its Scheme of Members' Allowances and Expenses.
- 1.2 The Remuneration Panel will be required to make recommendations for the formation of a new scheme for West Suffolk, and subsequently review the scheme agreed by the Council to ensure that it remains consistent, fair and relevant.
- 1.3 The Panel's recommendations should encompass:
  - a. The rates of basic allowance that should be payable by the Council to all of its Members.
  - b. The rates of allowances payable to those Members who have special responsibilities within the Council.
  - c. The rates of travel, subsistence and other allowances payable to Councillors when discharging their duties, to include payments made in respect of child and dependent caring duties.
  - d. The rates that should be payable to any co-opted Members of the Council, if appointed.
  - e. The frequency with which the rates should be reviewed or adjusted.
  - f. Any other matters that the Panel deem to be appropriate.
- 1.4 In undertaking their work, the Panel should be mindful of:
  - a. Any relevant legislation, including in relation to the payment of allowances and taxation.
  - b. Any relevant guidance issued by government departments or advisory bodies.
  - c. The need to respect the expectations of the general public in the payment of allowances.
  - d. The need to ensure that appropriate analysis and research is undertaken to ensure their recommendations are robust and evidence-based.
  - e. The need to ensure that the level of allowances is affordable to the Council.
  - f. The expectations placed on councillors, and the workloads and commitments generated as a result.
  - g. The need to ensure that councillors have the opportunity to put forward their views on levels of remuneration.

## **2. Membership of the Panel**

- 2.1 The panel shall serve a term of office for up to four years which shall be subject to an annual review. After four years a formal recruitment process shall be undertaken, with further appointments to be made for a term of no longer than four years. Panel members may seek re-appointment to the Panel.
- 2.2 The panel shall be made up of a minimum of three members appointed by a selection process to be agreed by the Council. The Council may also appoint advisors to the panel, who will not be voting members.
- 2.3 The members of the panel and advisors shall receive an allowance of £100 per meeting attended, plus travelling expenses of up to 45p per mile. Members of the panel and advisors may elect to waive their allowances and shall not be treated as employees, being responsible for their own tax, National Insurance and pension arrangements.
- 2.4 The Council shall have the right to remove members of the panel and advisors where they no longer meet the required criteria as established by the Council; commit a breach of confidentiality; persistently fail to attend meetings, or an act or behaviour which may otherwise bring the panel or the Council into disrepute.

## **3. Operation of the Panel**

- 3.1 The members of the panel shall elect their own Chair from amongst their members. The Chair shall be responsible for managing the business of the meeting, ensuring that meetings are conducted in an effective manner, and reach clear conclusions.
- 3.2 The panel should seek to draw consensus on their recommendations, but where they are unable to do so, minority opinions may be reflected in their subsequent recommendations and report.
- 3.3 The panel shall be supported by the Democratic Services Team of West Suffolk Council. The panel is encouraged to seek advice, seek the views of members of the Council, and undertake and commission research to support its work. The Council will support the panel by accommodating all reasonable requests for information and resources.

## **4. Advisor**

- 4.1 An advisor may be appointed, whose role will be to provide the panel with their views on matters under discussion and assist the panel in understanding the context of matters under discussion – effectively acting as a conduit between the Council officers, Council members and members of the panel. They are not a voting member of the panel and can be called on at the discretion of the panel. They will be entitled to attend panel meetings and have access to all papers and records of panel meetings.

## **5. Report and findings**

- 5.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel is required to produce recommendations for the Council, which will be articulated in reports, prepared by Council officers and agreed by the panel. These shall be presented by the Chair of the panel to the Council.

## **6. Access to meetings**

- 6.1 Panel meetings will not normally be open to the public although minutes and records of the panel will be open to public inspection.