
Subject: APPOINTMENT OF AN EAST KENT JOINT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Meeting and Date: EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL – 29 NOVEMBER 2023

Report of: HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND DEMOCRACY

Classification: UNRESTRICTED

Purpose of the report: To appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel as required under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended).

Recommendation:

- (a) That Dover District Council's continued participation in the East Kent Joint Independent Remuneration Panel be confirmed until 30 November 2027.
- (b) That Mr A Goodall be appointed as one of the two Dover District Council appointed representatives to the East Kent Joint Independent Remuneration Panel for a four-year term commencing 1 December 2023.
- (c) That the Head of Corporate Services and Democracy be authorised to take all necessary steps to advertise and shortlist candidates for the vacancy for the second Dover appointee.
- (d) That a panel comprised of the Chairman of the Governance Committee, the Head of Corporate Services and Democracy (or a nominated member of the Democratic Services team) and the Monitoring Officer be requested to shortlist and interview applicants for the vacancies and make recommendations for the appointment of an applicant to the Council meeting on 31 January 2024.
- (e) That the Head of Corporate Services and Democracy be authorised to agree the arrangements for the administrative support of the East Kent Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

1. Summary

1.1 The Council is required to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 for the purpose of making recommendations to the Council in respect of its Members' Allowances Scheme.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Since 2002 the Council has operated a Joint Independent Remuneration Panel with neighbouring authorities. While the initial Joint Independent Remuneration Panel was with Thanet District Council this was expanded in 2007 to become the first East Kent Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (EKJIRP) with Dover District Council, (the then) Shepway District Council and Thanet District Council. Shepway District Council withdrew the following year to be replaced by Canterbury City Council. The current Panel was formed in 2008 and consists of 5 members appointed jointly by Canterbury City Council (1 member), Dover District Council (2 members) and Thanet District

Council (2 members). The term of office of the current Panel members expires on 30 November 2023.

- 2.2 Following the May 2023 elections, consultation was undertaken with each of the partner authorities in the East Kent Joint Independent Remuneration Panel about continuing with the arrangements for a shared Panel and this report seeks to confirm the Council's continuing participation.

Panel Arrangements

- 2.3 The key responsibilities of the Panel as set out in the Regulations are to make recommendations as to the responsibilities or duties in respect of which the following allowances should be made available and the amount of allowance:

- Basic Allowance;
- Special Responsibility Allowances;
- Member Travel and Subsistence allowances;
- Dependent Carers Allowances; and
- Index linking arrangements for allowances.

- 2.4 The Council has a duty to have regard to the recommendations of the Panel when making a decision in respect of any of the allowances set out above but does not have to adopt the recommendations of the Panel.

- 2.5 In addition, the Panel also makes recommendations to Town and Parish Council's in respect of the level of Parish Basic Allowance and Parish Chairman's allowance.

- 2.6 The Regulations require that the Panel be composed of "at least three members none of whom... is also a member of an authority in respect of which it makes recommendations... or... is disqualified from being or becoming a member of an authority". This means that the members of the Panel may not be a member of the three district/city councils or any of the towns/parish councils in their administrative areas.

- 2.7 It is proposed that the Panel membership be reappointed on the current five member basis as follows:

- 1 member appointed by Canterbury City Council
- 2 members appointed by Dover District Council
- 2 members appointed by Thanet District Council

- 2.8 The quorum for the Panel is 3 members.

- 2.9 The proposed term length of the members of the Panel is for four years, running from 1 December 2023 until 30 November 2027. The Panel will be responsible for appointing its own Chairman from amongst the membership on an annual basis.

- 2.10 Dover District Council currently has one serving appointee (Mr A Goodall) on the Panel and one vacancy following the resignation of its second appointee. The vacancy was reported to Council on 1 March 2023 where it was agreed to leave the vacancy unfilled until the expiry of the Panel's term on 30 November 2023.

- 2.11 It is proposed to reappoint Mr A Goodall, a former Independent Member of the DDC Standards Committee, to the Panel for a further term on the basis of the experience he has accumulated in his time as a member of the Panel and his knowledge of the three authorities allowance schemes. In respect of the second appointment, it is proposed to advertise to fill the position.

- 2.12 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 make provision for the members of the Panel to be paid an allowance and expenses for carrying out the Panel's functions at a level the authorities determine.

- 2.13 The current allowance arrangements for the members of the East Kent Joint Independent Remuneration Panel were set in 2007. Each Panel member receives an allowance of £300 per annum plus an attendance fee of £75 per meeting. A further allowance of £250 per annum is paid to the Panel's Chairman. The costs of the Panel members' allowances are split equally between the partner authorities. On average the Panel meets two or three times a year, though this number increases when conducting the four-yearly parish review.
- 2.14 It is not proposed to change the allowance arrangements for the members of the Panel for the duration of the term of office running until 30 November 2027.
- 2.15 The Central administrative support for the Panel is currently provided by Dover District Council's Democratic Services team and it is proposed that this will continue. However, it is recommended that the Head of Corporate Services and Democracy be given delegated authority to agree the final administrative arrangements.

3. Identification of Options

- 3.1 Option 1: To confirm the Council's continued participation in the East Kent Joint Independent Remuneration Panel with Canterbury City Council and Thanet District Council.
- 3.2 Option 2: To form an Independent Remuneration Panel for Dover District Council only.
- 3.3 Option 3: To instruct the Head of Corporate Services and Democracy to investigate alternative arrangements for an Independent Remuneration Panel, accepting that the authority will have no Panel in place until such alternative arrangements are approved.

4. Evaluation of Options

- 4.1 Option 1 is the preferred choice. It continues the existing arrangements that have worked successfully since 2008 and bring resilience to the Panel through the pooling of resources and the resultant economies of scale through shared costs.
- 4.2 At the time of writing this report, Canterbury City Council has already confirmed its continued membership of the Panel.
- 4.3 Options 2 and 3 are not recommended as they would take longer to implement and would lose the benefits gained through the sharing a Panel.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 The proposal set out in Option 1 has no additional resource implications. However, if the Council were to choose Options 2 or 3 the resource implications would need to be reassessed as part of a further report.
- 5.2 The administration of the Panel generates a small income for Dover District Council through an agreed administrative fee charged to Canterbury City Council and Thanet District Council. All costs incurred by the Panel are split three ways amongst the partner authorities.

6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy has been consulted on the report and have no further comments to add. (SK)
- 6.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.
- 6.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report seeking confirmation of the Council's continued participation in the East Kent Joint Independent Remuneration Panel with Canterbury City Council and Thanet District Council, does not specifically highlight any

equality implications. However, in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149> (KM)

7. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference of the East Kent Joint Independent Remuneration Panel

8. **Background Papers**

None.

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