

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL MEMBERS

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Bob Deed, Leader of the Council
Responsible Officer: Kathryn Tebbey, Group Manager for Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

Reason for Report: to approve the recommended appointment to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Members' Allowances in Mid Devon

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) that Mr Jeremy Filmer-Bennett be appointed to the Independent Remuneration Panel until the Annual General Meeting in May 2023**

Financial Implications: it is recommended that the Council continues its current practice of paying travelling expenses when Panel members attend their meetings. The cost can be met within existing budgets.

Legal Implications: The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 set out the requirements relating to the appointment of Independent Remuneration Panels.

Risk Assessment: The Council must have an Independent Remuneration Panel of a least three members.

Equality Impact Assessment: None directly arising from this report.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: None directly arising from this report.

Impact on Climate Change: None directly arising from this report.

1.0 Introduction/Background

1.1 The Council must have an Independent Remuneration Panel to review members' allowances and the Panel must comprise at least three members. The Panel also acts as the relevant Parish Remuneration Panel within the district.

1.2 Historic guidance from the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister emphasises that the membership of the Panel must be truly independent – and be perceived to be such. Political appointments and those made through any personal association with the Council should always be avoided.

1.3 Further, it is desirable that there is continuity of experience in the Panel – with appointments being made for a period of several years and to ensure that there is always at least one member of the Panel with sufficient experience of the role.

2.0 Current Membership

2.1 By law, the minimum number of panel members is three. Following the resignation of a panel member earlier this municipal year, this leaves just two remaining members who are willing to continue. The Panel is therefore inquorate.

2.2 As many members will be aware, the Panel commenced a fundamental review of members' allowances in February 2019. The aim was to prepare a report for circulation to Members by the end of the calendar year. However, with the Panel being unable to sit in recent weeks, this work has had to be put on hold.

3.0 New Appointment

3.1 The Council advertised for new panel members in August. Panel members receive expenses, but are not remunerated. There were no expressions of interest and no applications.

3.2 Given the importance of the role and the need for the Panel to become quorate as soon as possible in order to complete the fundamental review, a direct approach was then made to South West Councils, the membership body which draws together and shares best practice and information for the benefit of councils across the south-west region.

3.3 Consequently, Mr Jeremy Filmer-Bennett contacted Member Services to express an interest in the role. Mr Filmer-Bennett has an extensive background in business, but has also worked with a number of councils around the country, and central government, in matters of commercial strategy and the business community. He was instrumental in establishing the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. Previously a resident of Tiverton, he now resides in North Devon where he is a parish councillor. He currently sits on the Independent Remuneration Panels for Torridge and North Devon Councils and therefore has very relevant experience.

3.4 The Monitoring Officer met Mr Filmer-Bennett on 16th September 2019 and is satisfied that he combines a good understanding of the role of local authority members, political sensitivity and the work of independent remuneration panels. He fully understood the processes of reviews and is available to commence work with the existing panel members immediately following appointment.

3.5 It is therefore recommended that **Jeremy Filmer-Bennett** be appointed as the third member of the Panel with immediate effect for the period to May 2023. The Panel will then comprise:

Karen Stone
Marianne Hulland
Jeremy Filmer-Bennett

4.0 Future appointments

- 4.1 Given the requirement for a minimum of three panel members, it would be desirable to make at least one further appointment. However, it would be better if this took place after the Panel has completed the fundamental review of members' allowances to avoid further delay to that review. It is anticipated that this review will now be completed by February 2020. A further recruitment process will then take place.

Contact for more Information: Kathryn Tebbey, Group Manager for Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, (01884) 234210 ktebbey@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report: Cabinet Member - Councillor R M Deed and Leadership Team

List of Background Papers:

- The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003
- Historic ODPM Guidance on members allowances and the appointment of the Independent Remuneration Panel