

Council

Allowance for Chairman of the Council

16 May 2012

Report of Head of Law and Governance

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To agree to pay an allowance to the Chairman of Cherwell District Council.

This report is public

Recommendations

Council is recommended to:

- (1) Agree that an allowance of £2000 be paid to the Chairman of the Council with effect from the municipal year 2012/13.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Chairman of Cherwell District Council plays an important ambassadorial role for the district representing the council at many events throughout the year, providing positive publicity and raising the profile of the district.
- 1.2 Whilst the Chairman of the Council does traditionally have a budget to support their activities as Chairman, e.g. arranging events, paying for wreaths etc the Chairman does not currently receive an allowance to meet the expenses of office. This report seeks to address this issues

Proposals

- 1.3 The Chairman of Council is the oldest of the Council's offices. Unlike the Chairmen of committees, the Chairman of Council has both an administrative and ceremonial role. Whilst the administrative role is important, in terms of time spent it is the smaller of the two functions. The administrative role centres around the chairing of meetings of full council, (approximately 6 meetings per year). Currently the Chairman of Council does not receive a Special Responsibility Allowance for this administrative role and whilst the issue is under active consideration by the Independent Remuneration Panel

there are currently no plans for a Special Responsibility Allowance to be recommended. The administrative functions of the Chairman are consequently outside the scope of this report.

- 1.4 The ceremonial role of the Chairman takes up a considerable amount of time and can see the Chairman invited to attend over 100 events per year. In carrying out this role the Chairman has not to date received an allowance, therefore the majority of their costs on transport, attending events, clothing and out of pocket expenditure have fallen directly on the Chairman themselves. The Chairman does have access to a modest budget to cover transport hire and organising their own events, but this budget is only adequate to cover these costs and does not provide an allowance for the Chairman. Therefore it is the Chairman themselves who has to carry the cost of carrying out their role on behalf of the Council.
- 1.5 Cherwell District Council has always appointed to the office of Chairman based on merit. Councillors are nominated by their peers and are selected based on having made a large contribution to the community and/or work of the council. This is a long established and proud tradition and is the highest honour that the Council can bestow on a serving councillor. However, it is important that Councillors should not be put off from accepting this honour due to the personal cost to them of accepting this role. As a public body the council has a duty to ensure that it does not create barriers to equality of opportunity and it is believed the non-provision of an allowance could create such a barrier.
- 1.6 Following discussion with the Leader of Council, officers have identified that an allowance of £2,000 per annum would be adequate to cover the costs currently personally incurred by the Chairman. Funding for this allowance could be made available from within the existing members budget at no increased cost to the council

Conclusion

- 1.7 In light of the issues outlined in this report, Council is recommended to agree to provide an allowance to the Chairman from the start of the municipal year 2012/13.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

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| Option One | To agree to pay a Chairman's allowance of £2,000 per annum. |
| Option Two | To pay a Chairman's allowance at a different level |

Option Three

Not to pay a Chairman's allowance.

Implications

Financial: The allowance can be met from within existing member services budgets.

Comments checked by Sarah Best, Assistant Accountant 01295 22

Legal: Under section 3 (5) of Chapter 70 of Local Government Act 1972 Council gives the power to provide an allowance to the Chairman to cover the cost of expenses incurred in carrying out the cost of their office. Therefore the proposals set out in this report are in line with legislation.

Comments checked by Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance 0300 0030 107

Risk Management: There are no risk implications arising from this report

Comments checked by James Doble, Democratic and Elections Manager 01295 221587

Wards Affected

All

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
None	
Background Papers	
None	
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