

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Governance, Audit and Finance Board held on 27 November 2019

Present

Councillor Briggs (Chairman)

Councillors P Bains, Crellin, Hart, Inkster and Patel

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor(s): Turner and Wilson

22 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Milne, Smith and Thomas.

23 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Governance, Audit and Finance Board held on 318 September 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the inclusion of Councillor Inkster in the attendance list and the following amendment:

Minute 16 – the reference to “Development Management Committee” to be amended to read “Governance, Audit and Finance Board”

24 Matters Arising

Minute 20 – Internal Audit Progress Report

With regard to the problems relating to obtaining information from CAPITA reported at the meeting of the Board held on 24 July 2019, the Board was advised that the scope had now been finalised and processes put in place to alert the Council if there was any delay in receiving the requested information. The Board was assured that it would be advised if the problem persisted.

25 Declarations of Interest

The Monitoring Officer advised that as the report of the Members’ Remuneration Panel recommended the introduction of a Special Responsibility Allowance for the role of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor might wish to consider declaring an interest. In view of this advice, Councillor Bains declared an interest as he was the Deputy Mayor and Mayor elect from next May.

It was acknowledged that although there was also a proposed change to the Leader of the Council’s Special Responsibility Allowance, the Leader of was not a member of the Board and was not therefore, required to declare an interest.

26 Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported that he had agreed to change the order of the items of the agenda so that the item relating to councillors allowances would be dealt with last.

27 Housing Subsidy Claims

Further to minute 41/12/2018 the Board received a presentation by the head of Customer Services on the Housing Subsidy Claim Service. The Head of Customer Service answered any questions raised.

The Board was advised that a copy of the presentation would be sent to all members of the Board after the meeting.

28 Internal Audit Progress Report

The Committee considered the progress report presented by Antony Harvey of the Southern Internal Audit Partnership, who joined the meeting for the debate on this item and answered member's questions in connection with the report.

The paper provided an update on the progress of internal audit activity completed in accordance with the approved audit plan, and summarised the status of 'live' reports.

The Committee were informed that the internal auditors remained confident that all outstanding work would be completed within agreed timescales.

RESOLVED that the Internal Audit Progress Report reflecting progress to 31 October 2019 be noted.

29 Current Work Programme

The Board considered changes to its work programme for 2019/20.

It was noted that the CAPITA scrutiny scheduled for 18 December 2019 would only take place if the reports were available for this meeting.

RESOLVED that the work programme attached as Appendix A to these minutes be approved.

30 Report of the Members' Remuneration Panel

(Councillor Bains left during consideration of this item)

The Board considered a report from the Members' Remuneration Panel setting out its findings and recommendations following a scrutiny review of the Councillors' Allowances Scheme. The Leader of the Council ("the Leader") and the Cabinet Lead for Finance and Coastal Communities ("the Cabinet Lead") were invited to join the meeting.

The Board noted the following amendments to the report

Schedule 1

The Chairman of Joint Human Resources Committee Allowance to be amended to read £3,643"

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee Allowance to be amended to read "£1,116"

The Chairman of the Members' Remuneration Panel introduced the report. She advised that the Panel's main consideration was to ensure that the Leaders Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) reflected the duties, responsibilities and workload attached to this post.

With regard to the the Mayoral post, the Panel had been asked to look into the possibility of creating an SRA for this post and its recommendations. The Panel had evaluated the post and included it within their recommendations.

The Leader declined to comment on the proposed changes to the leader's allowance. However, he submitted the following comments regarding the remainder of report:

- (a) he acknowledged that it was difficult to calculate an allowance for a post that reflected the duties and responsibilities attached to it and at the same time take into account that the post was voluntary and not expected to receive its full commercial value;
- (b) he emphasised that the levels or existence of Basic or Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) were not the driving force in becoming a councillor or accepting an SRA post;
- (c) He preferred to have some flexibility in the councillors' allowance scheme, which would enable him to afford to appoint Cabinet Leads or Assistance Cabinet Leads when needed;
- (d) he considered that the position of the Mayor should not receive a special responsibility allowance for the following reasons:
 - (i) to be appointed Mayor should be considered as a reward in itself;

- (ii) the Mayor already received an allowance of £3,000 under Section 3(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 to enable him to meet the expenses of the office;
- (iii) the operation costs (e.g. mayoral duties, secretarial costs etc.) of a Mayor was currently approximately £100,000 per annum; and
- (iv) the proposed additional allowance would hinder his flexibility to afford any new SRA posts and his long term aim for succession planning.

The Cabinet Lead supported the views of the Leader and emphasised that the position of the Mayor should be viewed as an honour. She reminded the Board that matter had been considered before and rejected. She advised that she had no objections to the other changes recommended by the Panel.

The Chairman drew the Cabinet Lead's attention to the fact even without the introduction of an SRA for the Mayor, the changes would result in an increase of £19,085 and asked if this was acceptable. The Cabinet Lead advised that although she was not happy about any additional expenditure, she would look into ways of accommodating the proposed increases, if the revised scheme was agreed.

The Board considered the report and the views of the Leader and Cabinet Lead in detail. The Board considered that whilst it was prepared to accept an increase in the Leader's SRA, it could not support an SRA for the Mayor for the reasons given by the Leader and Cabinet Lead and therefore agreed that the proposed SRA for the Mayor be deleted from the Councillors' Allowance Scheme.

It was therefore

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be requested to recommend the Council to adopt the Councillors' Allowance Scheme attached as Appendix B to these minutes.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 5.50 pm

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Chairman