

Council

25 March 2021

Agenda Item 130

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: **Members Allowances – Extract from the proceedings of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on the 18 March 2021**

Date of Meeting: **25 March 2021**

Report of: **Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law**

Contact Officer: Name: **Mark Wall** Tel: **01273 291006**
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**Action Required of Council:**

To consider the report and the recommendations from the Policy & Resources Committee.

Recommendation:

- (1) That the comments of the IRP regarding their encouragement to the Council to consider further information being shared regarding the nature and practical implementation of job share roles for Councillors be noted;
- (2) That a report be brought to the next meeting of Policy & Resources Committee to detail which jobs could be job shared in any revisions to the Scheme; and
- (3) That an Options Paper be brought to the next meeting of Policy & Resources Committee to decide on any revisions to the Members Allowances Scheme with regards to car parking passes, and for the options to include; separating the two car park concessions and reducing them, for permits to be limited in number per political group, choosing to have permits for one site only, allowing Councillors to make a larger monthly contribution for both car parks near the Town Halls or other suggestions which the IPR believe relevant.

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

4.00pm 18 MARCH 2021

VIRTUAL TEAMS MEETING

MINUTE EXTRACT

Present: Councillor Mac Cafferty (Chair) Druitt (Joint Deputy Chair), Gibson (Joint Deputy Chair), Platts (Opposition Spokesperson), Allcock, Clare, Miller, Simson, Wilkinson and Yates.

Also present: Dr Anusree Biswas Sasidharan, Standing Invitee.

PART ONE

175 MEMBERS ALLOWANCES

- 175.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law, concerning the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). relating to changes to the Members Allowances Scheme. The Executive Lead Officer noted that the Chair of the IRP was in attendance and he wished to thank the Panel for their work. He also noted that whilst the Panel made recommendations to full Council on the level of allowances attributable to each post, the numbers of committees, Chairs and roles was determined by the Council. He stated that following a change in Administration in July 2020, the option for various roles to be job-shared was taken up and this followed from reports to TECC and P&R on the Fawcett Society Report and the objective to encourage more people to become councillors and offer opportunities to a wider group of Members. The current Scheme restricted the ability to claim only claim one SRA and therefore did not reflect the ability to job-share more than one role.
- 175.2 The Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law stated that the IRP had received the views of Members and met with councillors to consider the possibility of amending the Members Allowances Scheme and their recommendations were reflected in the report. He also noted that an amendment from the Labour and Conservative Groups was due to be considered and in his capacity as the Monitoring Officer he needed to draw to the committee's attention that should the amendment be carried, he would need to submit a report to the full Council to ensure that it also received and considered the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.
- 175.3 The Chair noted the comments and invited Councillor Platts to move the joint amendment on behalf of the Labour and Conservative Groups.

- 175.4 Councillor Platts stated that both the Labour and Conservative Groups had concerns about how the job-sharing of Chairs' roles was working and felt that the Administration had not been clear about how the new arrangements would enable effective management of the decision-making process. She stated that the ability to job-share was supported by both Groups as it provided flexibility and recognition of time commitments that might prevent someone from undertaking a role full-time. However, it was felt that greater clarity was required where more than one role was being job-shared and others not, but part of the special responsibility allowance was being sought. It was therefore proposed that further discussion was required and further consideration by the IRP before any changes were made.
- 175.5 The Chair noted that the amendment had been moved and invited the Chair of the IRP to comment.
- 175.6 The Chair of the IRP thanked the Chair and stated that the Panel had recommended a Scheme for Members Allowances ahead of the last elections which would then last for the duration of the Council. He noted that the Panel had reserved the right to review the Scheme annually and to make any additional recommendations in light of any changes during the term of the Council. In this regard, it had considered the question of job-sharing of roles and had sought the views of Members before reaching its conclusions. He also noted that the amendment referred to the saving that had been agreed at the Budget Council meeting and stated that the Panel were minded to accept the decision as the overall budget was for the Council to determine and the Panel's role was to look at the impact on the Allowances Scheme. Whilst Members had previously contributed towards the cost of having a parking permit, the decision of Council meant that the Scheme should be amended to reflect that permits would no longer be given to Members.
- 175.7 The Chair thanked Mr. Childerhouse and the Panel for their work to date.
- 175.8 Councillor Miller formally seconded the amendment and stated that the Conservative Group had expressed reservations about the intention to job-share roles and how that would work effectively. There was also concern of the potential for any additional special responsibility allowances that were attributable to be back-dated at this point when further clarity was required on how they would operate and further consideration of how the overall Scheme should apply was required.
- 175.9 Members of the Committee noted that a budget saving had been approved at Budget Council which resulted in a potential £25k saving from additional parking revenue for Norton Road with the removal of permits for councillors. The IRP had been asked to consider this in light of the need to amend the Allowances Scheme to reflect the decision as those councillors who had previously opted for a permit had also been required to make a contribution towards the cost of the permit. The Committee noted that it did not prevent councillors from using the car park, it would just be that there was no guarantee of a space and it would be at their personal cost.
- 175.10 Members of the Committee felt that the job-sharing of roles had worked well and referred to the document that had been circulated at the council meeting in July which outlined how they would operate. It was suggested that the introduction of job-sharing had enabled more Members to gain experience and understanding of senior roles which would not have been open to them. However, other Members argued that

opposition roles were not recognised within the Scheme and those spokespersons also undertook a greater level of workload and responsibility. It was felt that there was a need for greater clarity on job-sharing could work and what roles would be suitable for such an arrangement and therefore more time was required before changes were made to the Scheme.

- 175.11 Councillor Clare noted that any delay in changing the Scheme would result in the option to back-date payments would be lost for the current year. She noted that the current Scheme required the Deputy Leader of the Council to Chair a policy committee. However, this meant that as she and Councillor Shanks job-shared the role, they also had to Chair a committee and therefore were only in receipt of 50% of the Deputy Leader's SRA. They believed that it was appropriate to be able to receive 50% of the Chair's SRA and thereby equate to a full SRA which was not possible under the current Scheme. She also referred to the Fawcett Society's report and the need to improve opportunities for women and others to take up positions of responsibility within local government as councillors and had hoped that the Council would take this forward rather than sit back. She also felt that the level of allowances for councillors were not sufficient and that it had become a full-time role and should be recognised as such.
- 175.12 Dr Sasidharan stated that she wished to echo the comments and agreed that the Basic Allowance for councillors needed to be reviewed and increased to recognise the value the role of councillor brought to both a local authority and its community. She believed that the ability to job-share was an important point of principal and should be recognised for the flexibility and equality that it offered.
- 175.13 Councillor Platts reaffirmed the Labour Group's support for job-sharing but felt that there was a need to address the confusion that had so far resulted and for greater clarity to the Scheme to be determined before changes were made.
- 175.14 Councillor Gibson stated that he hoped further dialogue could be held before full Council on the 25 March and that an equal payment for each role undertaken on a job-share basis could be recognised and any back-dated payments implemented as these roles had been fulfilled for the last year.
- 175.15 The Chair noted the comments and reiterated that the IRP were an independent panel of people which made recommendations to the full Council. He had not been made aware of the confusion caused from roles being job-shared and felt that it was a progressive way of working that should be favoured and supported by all Members. However, he noted that an amendment had moved and therefore put it to vote which was carried by 6 votes to 4.
- 175.16 The Chair then put the recommendations as amended to the vote which was carried by 6 votes to 4.
- 175.17 **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**
- (1) That the comments of the IRP regarding their encouragement to the Council to consider further information being shared regarding the nature and practical implementation of job share roles for Councillors be noted;

- (2) That a report be brought to the next meeting of Policy & Resources Committee to detail which jobs could be job shared in any revisions to the Scheme; and
- (3) That an Options Paper be brought to the next meeting of Policy & Resources Committee to decide on any revisions to the Members Allowances Scheme with regards to car parking passes, and for the options to include; separating the two car park concessions and reducing them, for permits to be limited in number per political group, choosing to have permits for one site only, allowing Councillors to make a larger monthly contribution for both car parks near the Town Halls or other suggestions which the IPR believe relevant.

