

Report of the General Purposes Committee held on 11 September 2019

Present: Councillor Paul Swaddle (Chairman), Robert Rigby and David Boothroyd

1. Parental Leave Policy for Councillors and Amendment of 2019-20 Members' Allowance Scheme

- (a) A number of informed groups including the London Councils' Independent Remuneration Panel have identified the lack of parental leave for elected Members in the majority of local authorities as a barrier to new parents becoming and remaining Councillors. The London Councils' Independent Remuneration Panel also identified that child care costs can be a significant deterrent to service as a Councillor and expressed the view that in appropriate cases Councillors should be entitled to claim an allowance for care of dependants when undertaking their Council duties.
- (b) We considered a report that set out proposals for a Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave policy for Members which will, if adopted, require an amendment to the Members' Allowances Scheme. The amendment to the 2019-2020 scheme also includes the provision for Councillors to claim reimbursement of care expenses they incur in arranging carers to look after dependants when they are undertaking approved Council duties.

We recommend:

That the Council be recommended to approve:

- 1. The adoption of a Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave Policy for Councillors attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 2. The ability for Councillors to claim reimbursement of care expenses when they attend approved duties and incur costs for the provision of care for children or adult dependants.
- 3. The amendments to the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2019-2020 attached as **Appendix 1** which incorporate the above mentioned provisions.

2. Changes to Full Council Meetings 2019-2020

- (a) We have considered a report on varying the business at the Council meetings on Wednesday 13 November and Wednesday 4 March 2020.
- (b) Following successful trials in 2017 and 2018, full Council agreed to move the receipt of the Leader's speech on council priorities and financial aims and consideration of budget proposals for the year ahead from March to November. The change, which was supported by the City Treasurer, was intended to allow departments to better plan on the full year basis for the

following fiscal year. Full Council also approved revised procedures including the associated changes to Standing Orders.

- (c) In February 2016 the government announced a 4 year settlement for local government, up to 2019/20. This meant that the Council had a reasonably stable view of its funding up to this financial year. However, the Council's funding in 2020/21 is extremely uncertain due to the spending review and fair funding review. Both of these areas are likely to have a significant impact on the funding the Council receives and we will not know the impact of this until December – when the local government settlement is announced.
- (d) Therefore it is proposed that Full Council's approval of the budget is moved from November 2019 to March 2020. This will ensure officers have the time to analyse the impact of the settlement on the Council's finances and produce a budget that reflects the 2020/21 settlement. As a consequence of this, it is proposed to convert the November meeting to an ordinary Council meeting.

We recommend:

That full Council be recommended to:

1. Change the Council meeting on 13th November from an Extraordinary meeting to an Ordinary meeting.
2. Change the Council meeting on 4th March from an Ordinary meeting to an Extraordinary meeting in order to receive a report including recommendations in respect of the reception of a speech by the Leader of the Council on council priorities and financial aims and to consider budget proposals in the form of estimates of income and expenditure for 2020 - 2021 as set out in Council Procedure Rules, Section 9.4 (1)(c) and 9.21 (1-3).

3. Amendment to the Members' Code of Conduct

- (a) We have considered a report on revising the Members' Code of Conduct following a recommendation by the Standards Committee.
- (b) The Standards Committee had, following a review of the Local Government Ethical Standards by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL), approved amendments to the Code of Conduct for adoption by the full Council on matters including bullying and harassment and the role of ward councillors and Planning Committee Members in relation to planning matters (particularly in relation to the acceptance of gifts and hospitality)
- (c) The General Purposes Committee have responsibility for proposing changes to the Constitution to full Council and are recommending the new Code for adoption and to amend the Constitution accordingly.

We recommend:

That the Council be recommended to approve the adoption of the revised Members' Code of Conduct (**Appendix 3**) with effect from 19 September 2019 and to amend the Constitution accordingly.

Paul Swaddle Chairman

Background Papers

Report to General Purposes Committee (11.9.19)