

APPENDIX 1

REPORT OF THE ST. HELENS INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel (“the Panel”) was established under the provisions of Part 4 of the Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The Panel is responsible for making recommendations to the St Helens Borough Council in respect of the payment of allowances to its elected members. The Council must have regard to those recommendations before making or amending a scheme of members’ allowances.
- 1.2 The Panel has recently been requested to consider and make a recommendation in relation to the option to offer remuneration to the Independent Person (“IP”) prior to the recruitment and appointment to this new role on the Audit & Governance Committee.
- 1.3 The proposal was considered by the Panel at a meeting on 17 June 2022 attended by the Monitoring Officer and this report sets out the Panel’s recommendations for consideration by Council.

2. Role of Independent Person - Audit & Governance Committee

- 2.1 The Panel noted the background as follows. At its Annual Council meeting on 30 September 2020, Council approved a recommendation to amend the Terms of Reference for the Audit & Governance Committee (“the Committee”) and to amend the membership to include an IP. This was to strengthen the membership of the Committee in accordance with the CIPFA best practice guidance (Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police, 2018 Edition). Council agreed to commence the recruitment process to co-opt an IP to the Committee for a fixed term of up to 3 years.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 23 November 2020, the Committee approved a role description and person specification for an IP to be co-opted to the Committee, following a recruitment process, with a view to a recommendation to Council to co-opt an IP in due course. It was not proposed at that time to pay remuneration for the role, other than expenses for attendance at meetings and training. A subsequent recruitment advert in December 2020 did not attract any candidates with appropriate skills and experience. The intention is to publish a further recruitment advert imminently but to offer remuneration this time in an attempt to attract suitable candidates. Some other local authorities have offered remuneration in recent recruitment adverts.
- 2.3 We have been asked for our views on the appropriate level of remuneration in respect of this new role.
- 2.4 It is our view that the IP should be recognised as an important role on the Committee, with an expectation to attend 4 committee meetings per year plus

training outside of those meetings. We noted that the Committee provides a key role in the risk, control and governance arrangements within the Council. The duties and responsibilities of this role are very important to ensure the Council has an effective audit committee as a key part of the Council's governance structure. They include requiring members of the Committee to be trained and briefed throughout the municipal year on a range of issues concerning the processes of the Council.

- 2.5 In our view, to attract candidates with the right skills and experience, this role should be remunerated.
- 2.6 We have also considered the role and responsibilities of this role and note the role description and person specification documents provided to us agreed by the Committee.
- 2.7 We understand that neighbouring Councils take different approaches to the issue of remuneration but there is an increasing trend to offer some remuneration rather than expenses only. Having considered benchmarked remuneration levels payable across the north-west region, we recommend £500 per year is an appropriate level of remuneration.

3. **Conclusions**

- 3.1 We have considered this issue and reached our own view as set out in this report. We recommend our conclusion for adoption by the Council.

Peter Bounds, Mike Mason, Peter Rushton

St Helens Independent Remuneration Panel

17 June 2022