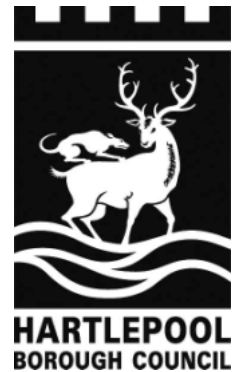


SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE AGENDA



Friday 17 July 2009

at 1.30 p.m.

**in Committee Room B,
Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

MEMBERS: SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE:

Councillors C. Akers-Belcher, S Akers-Belcher, Atkinson, Brash, James, London, A Marshall, J. Marshall, McKenna, Preece, Richardson, Rogan, Shaw, Simmons, Wright and Young

Resident Representatives: Iris Ryder and Linda Shields

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

No items.

4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

No items.

5. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS FROM COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AND NON EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

No items.

6. CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS

No items.

7. CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL MONITORING/CORPORATE REPORTS

No items.

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

7.1 Review of Publication Arrangements for Members Allowances, Expenses and Attendances – Joint Report of the Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Chief Executive.

8. CALL-IN REQUESTS

No items.

11. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

i) Date of Next Meeting Friday 31 July, 2009 commencing at 2.00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

17th July, 2009



Report of: Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Chief Executive

Subject: REVIEW OF PUBLICATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEMBERS ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To enable Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee to review the existing arrangements for publishing details of Members Allowances and Expenses and to determine it revised arrangements should be referred to Council.

2. REVIEW OF EXISTING PUBLICATION ARRANGEMENTS

2.1 In accordance with regulations issued by the Government – specifically “Statutory Instrument 2003 Number 1021 – The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003” all local authorities are required to: -

- Keep a record of the payments made to each Councillor in accordance with the authority’s approved Members Allowance Scheme showing the total sum paid in each financial year for the following categories:

- a) Basic Allowance;
- b) Special Responsibility Allowances;
- c) Dependent Carers Allowance;
- d) Travelling and Subsistence Allowance; and
- e) Co-optees Allowances

2.2 As soon as practicable after the end of the financial year the Authority must, in accordance with Statutory Instrument 2003/Number 1021 make arrangements for the publication within the Authority’s area of the total sum paid to each Councillor for the categories (a) to (e) detailed in paragraph 2.1.

- 2.3 In previous years the Council has discharged the above responsibilities by publishing the relevant details in the September edition of Hartbeat. The details published in Hartbeat have included the following wording to explain the detail shown for each Member.

“The Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances are determined by the Independent Remuneration Panel. These allowances are subjected to Tax and National Insurance. The Basic Allowance is paid to all councillors in respect of their responsibilities and workload as a ward councillor. Special Responsibility Allowances are paid to councillors who have specific additional responsibilities. Travelling and Subsistence is paid to councillors to reimburse costs incurred when performing approved duties (*including costs incurred when representing the Council on bodies outside Hartlepool). No carers or co-optees allowances were paid during this period.”

- 2.4 At a practical level the record of payments made to individual councillors maintained by the Council exceeds the statutory requirements detailed in 3.1 and the Council also records details of:

- Conference Travel;
- Conference Subsistence;
- Conference Fees;
- Telephone Expenses;
- Chair/Vice Chair of Council Allowance

- 2.5 In view of the increasing national profile of expenses claimed by MPs and to a lesser extent Councillor Expenses, Members may wish to review the Council’s existing publication arrangements and to then refer this issue to full Council.

- 2.6 One proposal which Members may wish to consider would be to include details of Members Allowances and Expenses in the annual Statement of Accounts. This would be in addition to the existing disclosure in Hartbeat. If Members wish to adopt this proposal they would need to determine the level of disclosure for each individual Members and there are two options.

- Option 1 – Disclosure Details required in accordance with Statutory Instrument 2003 Number 1071

This option would provide the following details for each Member:

- Basic Allowance;
 - Special Responsibility Allowance (where applicable);
 - Travel and Subsistence Allowance (where applicable)
- Option 2 – Exceed the Minimum Disclosure

This option would provide the following details for each Member:

- Basic Allowance;
- Special Responsibility Allowance (where applicable);
- Travel and Subsistence Allowance (where applicable);
- Conference Travel and Conference Fees;
- Conference Subsistence;
- Telephone Expenses;
- Chair/Vice Chair of Council Allowance

If Members adopt this option the details included in the Statement of Accounts would include a description of the payments detailed above as set out in Appendix A.

2.7 For Members information the total values disclosed under the two options would be as follows:

	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>
	£	£
Basic Allowances	273,384.11	273,384.11
Special Responsibility Allowances	145,963.47	145,963.47
Travel & Subsistence Allowances	2,677.11	2,677.11
Conference Travel	*	1,542.20
Conference Fees	*	2,737.45
Conference Subsistence	*	931.87
Telephone Expenses	*	2,270.84
Chair/Deputy Chair Allowance	*	12,695.69

* Details above minimum statutory requirement would not be disclosed under Option 1.

2.8 It is also suggested that Members may wish to support the detailed disclosure for 2008/2009 with details of the annual figures for the previous four years.

2.9 If Members determine they wish to include additional information in the 2008/2009 Statement of Accounts these details will be included in the final Statement of Accounts which will be referred to the Audit Committee in September, 2004. In future years this additional information will be included in the draft Statement of Accounts which are referred to the Audit Committee at the end of June.

2.10 At its meeting on 30th June, 2009, the Audit Committee were advised that this issue was being considered by your Committee. The Audit Committee support full disclosure of Members Allowances and Expenses and suggested that this issue be referred to Council.

3. RECORDS OF MEMBER ATTENDANCES

3.1 The Democratic Services Team records Members attendances at the 'formally Constituted Meetings of the Council', which are Council, its

appointed committees and forums and the meetings of the Executive (Cabinet, Portfolios and any executive committees). These are as set out in Part 3 of the Constitution in Section B (Council Functions and Delegation Scheme) and Section C (Executive Functions and Delegation Scheme).

- 3.2 The formal record of attendance is that which is set out in the minutes/decision record of a meeting. These attendances are based on the signed attendance sheets and the Democratic Services Officer's own notes. The attendance details from the attendance sheets, including apologies and substitutions, are subsequently transferred to a database of all Members' attendances for the municipal year.
- 3.3 Details from the database are available upon request. Individual Members may request their own attendances for a particular time period. Group leaders can also request details for their own party. However, details of an individual Member's attendances are not released to another Member or Group.
- 3.4 Also, in accordance with standard practice, the signed attendance sheets for meetings are retained and are open to public inspection. The details of the attendances recorded on the database have not been made open to public inspection but have been used to respond to Freedom of Information Act requests in the past.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is recommended that Members determine if they wish to recommend changes to supplement the existing statutory publication arrangements for Members Expenses and Allowances and refer this issue to Council.

MEMORANDUM NOTES - MEMBERS ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES

Note 7 on page 45 of the Core Financial Statements details the total value of Basic Allowances and Special Responsibility Allowances paid in 2008/2009 and the comparative figure for 2007/2008. This note provides a detailed breakdown of the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA's) paid to individual Councillors for 2008/2009, together with other expenses and costs allocated to individual Members.

The detailed arrangements for paying the Basic allowance, SRA's and other expenses are defined by specific rules in the Council's constitution. The key components of these rules are described below:

Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances

The value of the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA's) paid by the Council are based on recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

General Travel and General Subsistence

This covers expenses claimed by Councillors for travel and subsistence with a 35 mile radius of Hartlepool in respect of approved duties as a Councillor.

Conference Travel and Conference Fees

The Council has an approved list of conferences which specific Members are authorised to attend. The conferences and travel arrangements are booked by officers of the Council on behalf of the Councillor(s) attending the conference. The costs of the conference fee and travel arrangements are then recorded against the individual Councillor who attended the event.

Conference Subsistence

This covers the cost of overnight hotel accommodation and expenses claimed by Councillors for 'out of pocket expenses' whilst staying away from Hartlepool where meals are not provided for in the overall conference fees. The allowances claimable are based on approved national subsistence rates.

Telephone Expenses

Councillor can be reimbursed for the cost of line and telephone rental. Councillors are also eligible to claim for installing a telephone line if a line is not already connected. Councillors cannot claim for the cost of telephone calls.

Chair/Vice Chair of Council Allowance

These specific allowances are paid to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council to recognise the general costs associated with these positions from representing the Council in a public capacity within the town and region.

Taxation, National Insurance and pensionable status of allowances

Individual Councillors pay income tax and national insurance on all allowances payable to them. These allowances are not pensionable. When a Councillor loses office all allowances stop with immediate effect and no payments are made for the loss of office.