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## **ALLOWANCES PAID TO MEMBERS DURING 2015/16**

**Report by Chief Executive**

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### **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**19 May 2016**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 **This report seeks approval for the information on allowances paid to Members during 2015/16 to be published on the Council's website to meet the publicity requirements of the Local Government (Allowances and Expenses)(Scotland) Regulations 2007.**
- 1.2 The Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Regulations 2007, as amended, and the Local Government (Allowances and Expenses)(Scotland) Regulations 2007, as amended, specify the levels of salary, allowances and reimbursement of expenses which may be paid to local authority Elected Members. Councillors' salaries were increased by 1% from 1 April 2015 in accordance with The Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration and Severance Payments) Amendment Regulations 2015 and therefore the annual amount payable to each Councillor increased from £16,560 to £16,726 per annum, unless he or she was entitled to one of the higher amounts payable to the Leader of the Council, the Convener or to Senior Councillors. It should be noted that where a higher payment is made that is instead of the £16,726 and not in addition to this amount.
- 1.3 The number and designation of Senior Councillors was agreed in the Scheme of Remuneration at the meeting of Scottish Borders Council held on 24 May 2012, and then amended at the meeting of Council on 30 August 2012 to take account of changes to the Scheme of Administration. Detailed in Appendix 1 to this report is the remuneration and expenses paid to all Councillors from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. Detailed in Appendix 2 is Members' attendance at training events, conferences and seminars in 2015/16.
- 1.4 Total remuneration and expenses paid to Members in 2015/16 amounted to £778,149.99, compared with a total of £757,172.75 in 2014/15. Travel expenses total £56,452.83 in 2015/16, compared to the 2014/15 figure of £54,835.65. The cost of Telephone and ICT Expenses in 2015/16 amounted to £49,639.29 compared to £37,067.17 in 2014/15.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 **I recommend that the Council agrees that the information in the Appendices to this report be published on the Council's website, in order to meet the publicity requirements of the Local Government (Allowances and Expenses)(Scotland) Regulations 2007.**

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Regulations 2007, as amended, and the Local Government (Allowances and Expenses)(Scotland) Regulations 2007, as amended, specify the levels of salary, allowances and reimbursement of expenses which may be paid to local authority Elected Members.
- 3.2 Members' salaries were increased by 1% from 1 April 2015 in accordance with The Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration and Severance Payments) Amendment Regulations 2015 and therefore the annual amount payable to each Councillor increased from £16,560 to £16,726 per annum, unless he or she was entitled to one of the higher amounts payable to the Leader of the Council, the Convener or to Senior Councillors. It should be noted that where a higher payment is made that is instead of the £16,726 and not in addition to this amount.
- 3.3 The number and designation of Senior Councillors was agreed in the Scheme of Remuneration at the meeting of Scottish Borders Council held on 24 May 2012 with the rates agreed subsequently increased in accordance with details in paragraph 3.2 above as well as 1% increases effective from 1 April 2013 and 1 April 2014. During 2015/16 the Convener received £25,090 per annum and the Leader received £33,454 per annum (as per the regulations). The Depute Leader (Finance) received £25,090 per annum; the Vice Convener (Community Planning) received £22,666 per annum, as did the following Senior Councillors designated Executive Members for Social Work & Housing; Education; HR and Corporate Improvement; Roads and Infrastructure; Planning and Environment; Environmental Services; Economic Development; Culture, Sport, Youth and Communities; and Community Safety. A further 2 Senior Councillor posts were also designated – Convener of the Licensing Board, and Leader of the Opposition – and received £20,347 per annum. The Executive Member for Health Services (the additional funding for which is made by NHS Borders) is appointed as an additional Depute Leader with no further remuneration allocated to this role.

### **4 ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES DURING 2015/16**

- 4.1 Detailed in Appendix 1 to this report is the remuneration and expenses paid to all Councillors from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. The format of the Appendix is prescribed in the Local Government (Allowances and Expenses) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010 and the total amounts to £778,149.89. In 2014/15, this amount was £757,172.75.
- 4.2 The total amount of remuneration paid to Councillors in 2015/16 increased to £668,780.64 compared to £659,844.56 in 2014/15. This increase was due to the 1% rise from 1 April 2015 and also because Councillor McAteer did not hold office for the whole of 2014/15.
- 4.3 Travel expenses totalled £56,452.83 in 2015/16, compared to the 2014/15 figure of £54,835.65, a small increase. It should be noted, however, that the 2015/16 figure includes expenses incurred from 10 to 31 March 2016. These dates fall in the claim period reimbursed in month 1 of the following year and are not normally included until the next year's report. Expenses during the aforementioned period have been included this year to more closely follow accounting principles and amount to £1,855.25. The 2015/16 figure would therefore have been £54,597.58 when using the like for like

claim period as 2014/15, a minor reduction. The overall travel expenses figure is expected to fluctuate year on year as claims are based on actual journeys made. The amount any one Councillor claims also varies depending on whether they hold a Senior Councillor role, the distance they live from Council Headquarters, and whether their claims are up to date. Some Councillors have chosen not to make claims for travel expenses.

- 4.4 The cost of Telephone and ICT Expenses in 2015/16 paid directly by the Council amounted to £49,639.29 compared to £37,067.17 in 2014/15. This increase in costs is mainly due to the changeover of Members' broadband connections to the SWAN (South Wide Area Network) which gives greater security (being Public Sector Network compliant), increased data upload and download capacity, and speed. From August 2015, Councillors no longer receive paper copies of committee papers and use ipads instead to access the information, which has led to a saving in postage costs. The costs also include the running costs of all blackberries, mobile phones, as well as electronic tablets.

## **5 TRAINING EVENTS AND CONFERENCES**

- 5.1 Detailed in Appendix 2 is Members' attendance at training events, conferences and seminars in 2014/15, in the format recommended by the Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee. Fees, accommodation and travel (other than by car/van or public transport) for attendance are generally paid directly by the Council. Mileage and public transport costs to attend these events is claimed by the individual Member and included in Appendix 1 to this report. As part of their CPD, Councillors undertake refresher training related to specific committees e.g. Audit, Planning and Building Standards, etc. on an ongoing basis and this tends to be carried out in-house so there is no direct cost. Where this training takes place as part of the business of committee, it is not recorded separately and not therefore included in the appendix. This also applies to briefings for Members.
- 5.2 Work will begin in Autumn this year on developing an induction programme for all Councillors following the local government election in May 2017 and thereafter a more structured training programme for Members.

## **6 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 **Financial**  
There are no costs attached to the recommendation in this report as it details the actual expenditure made in the last financial year which were contained within the budget.
- 6.2 **Risk and Mitigations**  
The information contained in this report, together with the associated publication of the information on the Council's website, is intended to advise stakeholders of the allowances and expenses payments to Members, thus ensuring transparency and openness.
- 6.3 **Equalities**  
There is no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the recommendation in this report.
- 6.4 **Acting Sustainably**  
There are no effects on the economy, community or environment arising from the recommendation in this report.

## 6.5 Carbon Management

While there will be an impact on the Borders' carbon footprint from Councillor travel, where possible Members share transport, make use of the Borders railway and keep travel to a minimum. Due to the geographic spread of the Borders, travel is a factor in the duties of Councillors

## 6.6 Rural Proofing

There is no adverse impact on the rural area from the recommendation in this report.

## 6.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the recommendation in this report.

## 7 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, and the Chief Officer HR are being consulted on this report. Any comments received will be tabled at the Council meeting. The Corporate Communications Unit has also been advised of the content.

### Approved by

Chief Executive

Signature .....

### Author(s)

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**Background Papers:** Invoices

**Previous Minute Reference:** Scottish Borders Council, 25 June 2015

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jenny Wilkinson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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