

Corporate and Resources Committee

13 July 2021

Adjustment to Scheme of Members Allowances

Report by Executive Director, Corporate & Communities

Relevant Portfolio Holder; Communities and Engagement

Purpose of Report

To propose a minor adjustment to the provisions within the Scheme of Member Allowances in respect of care for dependants.

Recommendation(s)

The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that:

paragraph 8 of the Scheme of Members Allowances be amended to permit the payment of Dependants Allowance for travel time of up to 60 minutes in total when attending meetings or activities within the Borough.

Benefits to the Community:

The proposal will assist Members with dependent relatives to more effectively fulfill their civic functions and help remove a potential barrier to those with caring responsibilities who may wish to stand for election to the Council, thereby helping ensure the Council is as representative as possible of the communities that it serves.

Key Points

- A. The Council's Scheme of Member Allowances (attached at **Annex 1**) includes provision for the payment of up to £10.75 per hour to Councillors who incur costs in arranging care for dependent relatives living with them in order to enable them to undertake their duties as a Member. Dependent relatives are defined as children under the age of 14 and elderly or disabled relatives who could not be left alone.
- B. The maximum period for which any one claim can be made is the duration of the meeting or activity which the Member is attending, plus, in the case of meetings/activities within the Borough, 30 minutes in total to reflect travelling time to and from the venue. (For meetings that take place outside the Borough the actual amount of time spent travelling to and from the venue may be claimed.)
- C. It has become apparent that the reimbursable period of up to 30 minutes travel time, which effectively equates to 15 minutes in each direction, is insufficient. Not all journeys within the Borough can be completed within this time. It is therefore proposed that the Scheme be adjusted to enable Members to claim for the care costs of a dependant incurred whilst travelling for up to 60 minutes within the Borough. This would assist Members with dependent relatives to more effectively fulfill their civic functions and help remove a potential barrier to those with caring responsibilities who may wish to stand for election to the Council, thereby helping

ensure the Council is as representative as possible of the communities that it serves.

- D. When reviewing its Scheme of Member Allowances the Council is obliged to take into account the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel convened by London Councils. This proposal is consistent with the Panel's most recent report, issued in 2018, which states;

“It is important that obstacles to becoming a councillor should be removed wherever possible. Child care costs can be a significant deterrent to service as a councillor. We repeat our strong view that in appropriate cases when they undertake their council duties, councillors should be entitled to claim an allowance for care of dependents. The dependents’ carers’ allowance should be set at the London living wage but (on presentation of proof of expense) payment should be made at a higher rate when specialist nursing skills are required.”

- E. The financial implications of such an adjustment would be minimal. Total expenditure on the payment of all travel and subsistence costs and dependants allowances in the 2019/20 financial year (when the figures were broadly unaffected by the Covid-19 pandemic) amounted to £1,265

Background papers

None

Author of report - Gary Marson, Corporate Head of Democratic & Electoral Services, email: gary.marson@kingston.gov.uk