

## **LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY 2017**

### **Members' Allowances Scheme - Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Panel**

#### **Report of Sir Rodney Brooke CBE DL**

1. In 2015 I reviewed the Members' Allowances Scheme of the London Borough of Hackney, advising the Council on the application of the recommendations of the London Members' Allowances Panel to the Council's Scheme. The Council accepted and implemented the recommendations in my report. The scheme has since been slightly amended on my recommendation.
2. In February 2016 the Scrutiny Chairs Group agreed to carry out a review of the Overview & Scrutiny function in Hackney. The review was conducted by independent consultants. In October 2016 the Council decided to implement the recommendations of the consultants. Specifically it was agreed that a Scrutiny Panel should replace the Scrutiny Chairs Group.
3. The Scrutiny Panel will meet quarterly. It will include in its members the chairs of the four Scrutiny Commissions together with the vice-chairs of the four Scrutiny Commissions and a member of the larger opposition group if not already represented as a chair or vice-chair of a commission. The Scrutiny Panel will have the power to invoke the call-in procedure and to summon the Mayor and other executive members for questioning. It will oversee the scrutiny work programme, co-ordinate the involvement of scrutiny in the budget process and identify matters of public concern and cross cutting reviews to deal with scrutiny opportunities which fall between the remits of the topic-specific commissions. It may make recommendations to the Commissions on their work programme. It will operate as a forum of shared learning, identifying and sharing good practice.
4. The Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Panel will be a member of the opposition in order to provide a transparent mechanism for holding to account the Mayor and Cabinet members. It is intended that the Vice Chair will have the power to invoke the call-in procedure (assuming the support of the required number of councillors) together with authority to summon the Mayor or relevant Cabinet member to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Panel. The intention is that the Vice Chair will be the scrutiny lead for the opposition groups and will act as a liaison between the scrutiny function

and the opposition groups in order to integrate the opposition parties with the scrutiny function.

5. I have been asked to advise on the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) which should be paid to the Chair and Vice Chair of the new Scrutiny Panel. Both, in my view, fall within Band One of the recommendations of the London Members' Allowances Panel.
6. The new Scrutiny Panel will meet only four times a year, unlike the Scrutiny Commissions, which will meet on eight occasions. Their Chairs will have a role which will be substantially more demanding in terms of time. The current Scrutiny Commission chairs receive an SRA of £13,553.05. Given the difference in workloads, I believe that a suitable SRA for the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel would be **£8,224.73**. I think that this is a sensible SRA, given the differential workloads between the Scrutiny Commissions and the Scrutiny Panel.
7. In Hackney Vice Chairs do not receive Special Responsibility Allowances. However the Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Panel will have a clearly defined and very significant constitutional role, including proposing call-in and summoning the Mayor and Cabinet members for questioning. The Vice Chair must liaise with and make sure that the opposition parties are fully engaged in the process of scrutiny. These specific responsibilities warrant the allocation of a Special Responsibility Allowance to the Vice Chair. I suggest that a suitable amount would be two-thirds of the SRA paid to the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel, ie **£5,483.15**.

### **Recommendation**

A Special Responsibility Allowance of **£8,224.73** be allocated to the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel and a Special Responsibility Allowance of **£5,483.15** to the Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Panel.

**Rodney Brooke**

**1 February 2017**