

Briefing Note for Members of the Swale Borough Council Independent Remuneration Panel

Background

1. In accordance with legislation and a period of public consultation, the Council decided in December 2010 which form of political management arrangement it intended to adopt. The new arrangement was to become effective following the elections held in May 2011.
2. The adopted arrangement is known as the strong leader model which means that:
 - once elected by full council, the leader continues in office for four years – until the year they are due for re-election unless removed by resolution;
 - the Leader is able to appoint members of the cabinet, which must include at least two other councillors but he must notify Council of appointments made; and
 - the budget can only be defeated if at least two-thirds vote it down.
3. The strong leader and the cabinet are responsible for:
 - agreeing policy development and proposing the budget;
 - conducting strategic service reviews;
 - promoting the council's interests in partnership; and
 - implementing decisions of the full council with the council's officers.
4. The strong leader model gives the Leader of the Council wider and more extensive powers in relation to the appointment of members of the cabinet provided that the total number, including the Leader, does not exceed 10.
5. Following the May election the Leader has decided how he intends to run the political administration of the Council. Under the Regulations setting up independent remuneration panels it is legitimate for the Council to revoke or replace its members allowances scheme when it changes the form of executive including its executive arrangements.
6. The purpose of this note is to provide information to the Panel so that it can make any recommendations it wishes.

Proposal

7. Following the change in its executive arrangements it is proposed that the arrangements for Cabinet members and for the special responsibility allowances be amended as follows:
 - (i) Cabinet Members for a particular portfolio are the budget holder and the principal decision maker and is the Cabinet member with whom the accountable Director or Head of Service works. The sharing of

responsibilities and how that shared relationship works is for the Cabinet Member to design and agree with the Deputy Cabinet Member;

- (ii) Cabinet members will have joint responsibility for any collective cabinet decision and any individual decision for their particular area. They shall, where reasonably practical, only take such decisions after having discussed and reached agreement with any Deputy Cabinet Member;
 - (iii) in the event that after such discussion the Cabinet and Deputy Cabinet Member do not agree on the decision to be taken, the decision shall be referred to, and taken by, the Leader;
 - (iv) Deputy Cabinet Members, whilst having no decision making powers, have the following responsibilities:
 - a. leading on developing policy proposals as directed;
 - b. attending at appropriate internal meetings, including Cabinet and overview and Scrutiny. In respect of Cabinet they will not have any voting rights;
 - c. advising on decisions to be taken by the Cabinet Member;
 - d. representing the Council and Cabinet member at external meetings;
 - e. chairing relevant working parties, as appropriate; and
 - f. handling any media interviews and enquiries on behalf of the Cabinet Member in his absence.
7. As a result of the move to these revised political management arrangements, the main Opposition Party has requested that the special responsibility allowances for posts which are granted to members of their party be reviewed to reflect their wish to operate a more formal shadow cabinet arrangement. To achieve this they have asked to create the role of Chief Whip, the details of which are contained in Annex 1.
8. In the current financial climate the members are keen to ensure that in agreeing any amendment to the allowances scheme it does not exceed the current budget for special responsibility allowances. Annex 2 provides a comparison of the existing and proposed scheme.

Recommendation

9. The Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel are invited to provide any comments and recommendations on the suggested review of the Special Responsibility Allowances.

Role Description for Group Whip to the Labour Group on Swale Borough Council

The Whip will play a central role in assisting the Group Leader in the management and organisation of the Labour Group.

The Whip will be responsible for monitoring attendance by Labour Councillors at Council meetings, including meetings of the group. Where necessary, the Whip will facilitate the appointment of substitutes to committees and panels.

The Whip will act in a supporting and co-ordinating role to members of the group, advising on individual progress, advising on training and development and on building good relationships with officers of the Council and recording activities as appropriate.

The Whip will make an Annual appraisal of members' performances and attendance and will report to the Group Leader and to the local party as agreed against council criteria.

The Whip will advise the Leader on appointments to committees, panels and outside bodies, and give further advice on appointments to any posts of responsibility

The Whip will encourage members in their work as Community Leaders and will likewise encourage Labour members to liaise with other agencies other than Swale Borough Council.

The Whip will assist the Leader of the Group in ensuring that Labour members play an effective role at Full Council meetings, in scrutiny and on Committees.

The Whip will work with the Group Leader and the Chairs of Policy Overview and Scrutiny to ensure the Labour Group are effective in holding the governing administration to account, in the interests of the whole community of Swale.

The Whip to be the Labour Group's consultee in relation to Members Allowances.

Special Responsibility Allowances

	Existing Number	Actual Cost £	Proposed Number	Proposed Cost £
Leader	1	11,700	1	11,700
Cabinet	9	63,180	6	42,120
Deputy Cabinet members			3	10,530
Minority leaders	2	11,700	2	6,435 3,218*
Scrutiny Chairman	2	7,020	2	6,435
Planning Chairman	1	3,510	1	3,510
Planning Spokesperson	1	1,170	1	1,170
Audit Chairman	1	1,170	1	1,170
Labour Chief Whip			1	3,218
TOTAL		99,450		83,071**

* Please note that the current Leader of the Independent Group does not intend to take his allowance

** Figure does not include the Leader of the Independent Group's Special responsibility allowance