

MEMBERS' STAFF COST PROVISION REVIEW

Executive Summary

1. The SPCB is invited to agree the Staff Cost Provision Review (SCP), attached for approval.
2. The SPCB budget bid for 2021-22 will incorporate the financial resourcing requirements.
3. A resolution of Parliament will be required to change the Scheme so that changes can be implemented from the start of Session 6.

Issues and Options

4. Key recommendations are summarised from page 5 of the Report. I would highlight the following:

Pressure/capacity

5. There is clear evidence to support an increasing pressure on existing Member staffing support which bears out feedback in the wider Expenses' Review. This review reflects the actual impact of additional powers and wider representative needs. It would be reasonable to assume that casework levels will remain under pressure especially throughout the pandemic and in its aftermath. Additional parliamentary business is also anticipated in Session 6 as the UK exits the EU.

Level of provision

6. The report reflects a recommended 1FTE based on the maximum of the caseworker scale, as analysis shows this is an area of pressure. As described above, there is evidence to support pressures which we expect to continue for the foreseeable future. The level of additional provision to meet the capacity pressures is a judgement call.

Staff pay

7. The market analysis has established that some adjustments are required to the proposed new pay ranges. Existing pay ranges have been consolidated into fewer levels with wider salary ranges. This should enable Members, working with HR support, to have greater flexibility in developing roles and setting pay. We recommend the Scheme is amended to make it clear that staff paid through the Scheme must be employed within the pay ranges and job families. It remains a matter for individual Members how they use the SCP to meet their staffing requirements.

Other HR support for Members

8. Over this session the SPCB has agreed to increased HR support for Members on training and recruitment. The staff feedback suggests more can be done to improve

staff development. We propose to consolidate these arrangements with more HR centralised support for Members. This is a more cost effective and efficient approach and, correspondingly, we have recommended a reduction in HR's delegated authority on training and recruitment for Members, to be more reflective of actual spend.

Resource Implications

9. SPCB should note the slight risk around Office Cost Provision levels set out at Pages 12 and 13 should Members employ more staff in their local offices and our recommended approach.

Governance issues

10. The Finance and Constitution Committee will scrutinise the SPCB budget in mid-December 2020. The recommendations in the report will need to be approved by changes to the Scheme which will be voted on by Parliament via a resolution.
11. An equalities impact assessment (EQIA) has been completed on the Review Report recommendations.

Publication Scheme

12. This paper and the Review Report will be published.

Next steps

13. Announcement of the review's recommendations to Members. Scrutiny of the resourcing implications and approval by Parliament as reflected above.

Decision

14. SPCB is invited to:
 - Approve the Review Report and its recommendations.
 - Approve the financial resourcing implications for inclusion in the 21/22 budget bid.
 - Agree communication of the Review Report to Members.

Michelle Hegarty
Deputy Chief Executive
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