

# SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

13 DECEMBER 2017

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## AGENDA ITEM C8

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEMBERS DETERMINATION 2017 – COMMUNICATION ALLOWANCE

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#### **Purpose of Report**

To confirm the recommended changes to the Communication Allowance to be paid to Councillors as a result of the Remuneration Authority Determination 2017.

#### **Recommendations**

Officers recommend that the Council:

1. *Receive the Local Government Members Determination 2017 – Communication Allowance Report.*
2. **Either** *confirm they will continue to pay 50% of the proposed payment of the full communication allowance up to a maximum of \$1,190.00 per year per Councillor (\$595.00 for the 2017/18 financial year) or*
3. *Confirm they will adopt the RA's proposed payment of the full communication allowance up to a maximum of \$1,190.00 per year per Councillor for the 2017/18 financial year and amend Policy A300 Remuneration – Elected Members to reflect this.*

#### **1. Executive Summary**

At the September 2017 Council meeting, the decision regarding the level of communication allowance to pay to Councillors was deferred until after the completion of the trial of Stellar electronic agendas.

This trial has been completed successfully and Council now need to consider what level of communication allowance will be paid to Councillors for the 2017/18 financial year.

## 2. Background

On 27 July 2017, the Remuneration Authority (RA) released the Local Government Members (2017/18) (Local Authorities) Determination 2017.

This determination provides for changes to the remuneration and reimbursement of elected members and takes effect from 1 July 2017.

TA's can agree to accept the determination in its entirety or agree adjusted remuneration or reimbursement as long as it is not higher than provided for in the determination.

Council considered these changes at the meeting on 20 September 2017 and agreed to defer the decision regarding the Communication allowance until the trial of Stellar electronic agendas had been completed.

This trial was successful and Council agreed to adopt Stellar electronic Agendas for councillors agendas at its meeting on 25 October 2017.

## 3. Discussion

3.1 The Remuneration Authority determination allows that a communication allowance may be paid to elected members for using their own communications and technology equipment on Council business.

Elected members may be paid the following communication allowances for the 2017/18 financial year:

- \$200 for the use of one laptop/computer or tablet
- \$40 for the use of a printer/fax or scanner
- \$150 for the use of a mobile phone
- \$400 for the use of personal internet
- \$400 for the use of personal mobile phone or reimbursement of actual costs of phone calls made on behalf of the local authority.

This equates to a potential total communication allowance of \$1,190.00 pa per elected member.

3.2 Currently Policy "A300 Remuneration – Elected members" includes the following clause:

### ***Communication Allowance***

*A communication allowance will be paid to the Mayor and Councillors at 50% of the maximum amount set under s13(3) of the Local Government Elected Members Communication Allowance determination. This will be pro-rated in election years.*

For the 2016/17 financial year, SWDC paid a communication allowance of \$525.00 per councillor.

If Council wish to increase the reimbursement to 100% of the amount allowed in the determination, we estimate this will cost and additional \$6,650 per annum. This additional cost has not been budgeted in the 2017/18 annual plan.

3.3 Council considered these changes at the meeting on 20 September 2017 and agreed to defer the decision regarding the Communication allowance until the trial of Stellar electronic Agendas had been completed.

At the Council meeting on 25 October 2017, Council made the following resolution:

That Council agenda documents, including community board, committee and working group papers are delivered to councillors electronically utilising Stellar Board Books.

Subsequently, Council has subscribed to a 20 user license of Stellar software.

Council now needs to agree whether to continue the current policy of paying 50% of the recommended Communication Allowance or change Policy A300 to pay 100% of the Communication Allowance in light of the decision to use Stellar software for Agendas going forward.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Council needs to decide what level of expenditure will be approved for the 2017/18 financial year for the communication allowance covered in the Local Government Members (2017/18) (Local Authorities) Determination 2017.

Two options are presented for Council to consider:

**Option 1** – Continue to pay at 50% of the maximum allowed by the RA in line with Policy “A300 Remuneration – Elected members”.

**Option 2** – Agree to pay 100% of the maximum allowed by the RA and amend Policy “A300 Remuneration – Elected members” to reflect this change.

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