

SUBJECT:	<i>Independent Remuneration Panel's Recommendations for 2017/18</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>Jim Burness, Director of Resources</i>
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WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>All</i>

1. Purpose of Report

To present the report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) following its review of the Council's Scheme of Allowances for members and for Council to agree a Scheme of Allowances for members for financial year 2017/18.

RECOMMENDATION

The Council is RECOMMENDED to:-

- 1. Note the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel at Appendix 1 and thank them formally for the work they have done in producing the report**
- 2. Consider the recommendations from the Panel summarised in Appendix D of their report including an increase in the Basic Allowance, changes to some of the Special Responsibility Allowances, introduction of a new SRA for the Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee and uprating of Dependants Carers Allowance.**
- 3. Either:-**
 - a) agree the IRP recommendations in full or individually**
 - b) agree a different level of Basic Allowance, Special Responsibility Allowances, Dependant Carers Allowance and Travelling and Subsistence Allowance and agree indexation arrangements for future years**
- 4. To approve the wording of the Members Allowances Scheme for 2017/18 attached at Appendix 3 subject to the inclusion of the allowance figures agreed by the Council's under recommendation 3.**

2. Reasons for Recommendations

The reasons for the IRP's recommendations are set out in full in their Report attached as Appendix 1. The Council must adopt a Scheme of Allowances for its members before the start of each financial year and must do so having regard to the recommendations made by an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).

3. Content of Report

Relevant Legislation and Council Duties

- 3.1 Every local authority must make a scheme in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 which provides for the payment of a Basic Allowance (BA) to each member of the authority and specifies the amount of that allowance.
- 3.2 This scheme may also provide for the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) to members who have a special responsibility in one or more of the following categories:-
- a) Acting a leader or deputy leader of a political group within the authority;
 - b) Acting as a member of the Cabinet;
 - c) Presiding at meetings of a committee or sub-committee or joint committee;
 - d) Representing the authority at meetings of, or arranged by any other body;
 - e) Acting as a member of a committee or sub-committee which meets with exceptional frequency or for exceptionally long periods;
 - f) Acting as a spokesman of a political group on a committee or sub-committee;
 - g) Acting as a member of any committee or sub-committee that deals with licensing functions;
 - h) Carrying out other activities in the discharge of the authority's functions which require an amount of time and effort equal to or greater than required of a) to g) above

The amount of the SRA must be specified in the scheme.

- 3.3 The scheme may also provide for :-
- a) payment of Dependants' Carers' Allowance (DCA) to members for the expenses they incur in arranging for the care of children or dependants when attending meetings and other official duties approved by the council;
 - b) payment of travelling expenses and any subsistence incurred in undertaking official duties prescribed in the Regulations, and
 - c) an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to an index specified by the authority, for up to 4 years, after which time the Council must seek a further recommendation from the IRP on the application of an index to its scheme.
- 3.4 The Regulations require every local authority to establish an IRP consisting of at least three members who are appointed following a public advertisement and who cannot also be elected members of the authority concerned. Before an authority makes or amends its scheme of members allowances it must have regard to the recommendations made by its appointed IRP. The authority does, however, retain the discretion not to agree or follow those recommendations, after giving them due regard. In these circumstances the authority should give reasons for its decision.

Current Scheme of Allowances

- 3.5 The member allowances for the current financial year are shown at Appendix 2. Following recommendations made to the Council by its IRP in 2009 for financial year 2010/11, the amount of the basic allowance has been considered and uprated annually in line with staff pay

increases. In view of the passage of time since the Council last received recommendations from an IRP it has been necessary to reconvene an IRP to review the allowances scheme and recommendations on the indexation. For comparison the current allowances updated by the staff pay increase of 1% as also shown at Appendix 2.

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- 3.6 Following the statutory public advertisement and receipt of applications, the Director of Resources appointed an IRP of 4 members who met on three occasions in 2016 to review the current scheme and make recommendations on each allowance as required by the Regulations. The full report is attached at Appendix 1 and the main points are summarised below.
- 3.7 The Panel's starting was to consider the Council's current scheme of allowances and compare it with the schemes of other councils in Buckinghamshire, particularly Chiltern District Council (CDC) as well as other councils of a similar size. They looked at what had changed for SBDC councillors since 2009 and noted the joint working arrangements with CDC from 2012 onwards involving a shared Chief Executive and senior management team with shared delivery of services to the public and local communities. They also noted this arrangement involves close working between the Leaders at both SBDC and CDC who meet on a regular basis, as well as the respective Cabinet portfolio holders at each Council who sit on a Joint Committee.
- 3.8 The Panel also noted that the number of councillors reduced from 40 to 28 in 2015 following an electoral boundary review, that councillors now receive and read council meeting agendas electronically and that changes introduced by the Localism Act 2011 transferred responsibility for standards issues to the Audit Committee. Finally they looked at the time spent by councillors on council business and the level of responsibility across the various roles, as set out in the Council's constitution
- 3.9 The Panel reaffirmed the approach of the previous IRP that the BA should be objective and transparent, based on the average time councillors spend on council business, a suitable remuneration rate and recognition of the public service aspect of the councillor's role. They noted this approach is used at other councils, including Elmbridge and Runnymede (both in the Family Group).
- 3.10 Having considered information about meetings and other council and ward responsibilities the Panel concluded that 14 hours per month was a suitable average for time spent on council business. To establish an hourly rate the Panel used the LGA's approved daily rate for members and to acknowledge the fact the councillor role is essentially one of voluntary public service, a deduction of 33.33% was applied. This formula was used to calculate a BA of £4,480 and indexation was proposed in line with the increase in the LGA daily rate for members.
- 3.11 With regard to SRAs the Panel recognised the increased responsibility of the Leader in appointing the Cabinet and cabinet portfolios and additional workload arising from the joint working arrangements with CDC. They were also satisfied that the responsibilities of the Deputy Leader had increased in line with the Leader and noted the joint working undertaken by Cabinet Portfolios holders with their counterparts at CDC including the regular Joint

Committee meetings. They therefore concluded that it was appropriate to uprate these allowances in line with the respective allowances at CDC.

3.12 The Panel also considered that the additional responsibility of the Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee merited recognition and noted the changes to work load of the other regulatory committees since the allowances were last reviewed, including the Licensing and Audit Committees.

3.13 When the Panel compared the DCA rates with other councils' rates they were found to be low in comparison and they have therefore recommended revisions to both the childcare and dependants' carers' allowances. No change was considered necessary in respect of subsistence rates for councillors which are set in line with subsistence rates for officers or travel allowances which are set in line with the HMRC recommended rates.

4. Options

The Council, having considered the IRPs report and recommendations can choose to adopt the recommended allowances and proposed indexation in full, agree individual recommendation or agree different levels of allowances. The Council must however set the level of the BA and any indexation for future years and also agree the level of any SRAs, DCA and Travel and Subsistence allowances to be paid.

5. Corporate Implications

5.1 Financial – A draft 2017/18 budget for members' allowances has been set at £181k. The full year cost of the IRP's recommendations (excluding indexation) is shown in Appendix D to their report and falls within the draft budget.

5.2 Legal – The statutory duties relating to member allowances which the council is obliged to follow are contained in The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and referred to paragraph 3 above.

5 Next Steps

The Allowances scheme agreed by the Council must be published on the Council's website and in the local press together with a copy of the IRPs report.

Background Papers:	None other than referred to in this report and appendices
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