

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES REVIEW

Officer contact: Ian Hunt, Democratic Services Manager

DDI: 01494 421208

Wards affected: None directly

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL:

That

- a) *The report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) on Members' Allowances be noted.*
- b) *The Panel be thanked for its work.*
- c) *The recommendations from the IRP, as set out at paragraph 8 of the report, be considered and determined accordingly.*
- d) *the Democratic Services Manager be authorised to amend the Scheme accordingly to reflect any agreed amendments.*

Corporate Implications

The Council is required under the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to look at councillors' allowances and report its views on the terms and conditions of the Members' Allowances Scheme to the Council. No changes may be made to a scheme by the Council unless the IRP has first considered the matter, and the Council is required to consider the findings of the IRP.

Executive Summary

1. Before agreeing any amendments to the Scheme of Members' Allowances, the Council is required to consider the report of an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) appointed to review those allowances and make recommendations to the Council. The Panel met in July and September this year to consider the scheme of allowances and considered several issues associated with the scheme. The IRP's report is attached to this report as appendix 1.
2. In accordance with the Regulations, notice of receipt of the IRP report has been published in a local newspaper and also on the Council's web site. A copy of the IRP report has also been made available to all Members of the Council.

Background

3. The IRP first met in 2000 to consider and make recommendations concerning basic and special responsibility allowances. The Council's current Scheme of Allowances was introduced following the meeting of the IRP in December 2006 and was updated as a result of the Panel's recommendations made at their previous reviews in 2008, 2010 and 2013. The recommendations arising from

the last review were considered by this Committee in June 2013, and by full Council in July 2013. The updated scheme was then duly implemented.

4. Full details of the IRP's deliberations in this current review are contained within their detailed report at appendix 1.

The Current Review

5. It is good practice for an Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme to be reviewed every 2 years, and this review was undertaken two years since the previous review, and immediately after the District Council Elections in May 2015. The present scheme was taken as the starting position for the review.
6. The full report from the IRP at appendix A sets out in detail the methodology of the current review, the process that the IRP adopted, together with the documentation and data that the IRP considered throughout the review. This included detailed benchmarking data and analysis from other District and Borough Councils across the country of their Schemes, and the current Members Allowances Scheme for the Council.
7. All Members of the Council were also invited to submit any representations to the IRP, together with indicating whether they also wished to make any representations in person. The IRP's report, attached as appendix 1, documents the representations that were received and also provides details of the discussions held in person with Councillors.

Summary of Recommendations Arising From The Review

8. The report from the IRP at appendix 1 provides a full detailed summary of the issues considered throughout the review. The following table summarises these issues considered by the Panel and the recommendations currently being made to the Council:

No.	Issue	Recommendation & Comments
1	The level of the Chairman's allowance.	The IRP recommend that the allowance for the Chairman of the Council should be the same as for the Leader of the Council and should not be more.

2	The Chairman's allowance not to include travel expenses	The IRP recommend that the allowance should be for the role of Chairman and any travelling expenses incurred should be claimed in the normal way as for any member incurring expenses in their roles.
3	Establishment of a separate budget code 'Chairman's Office expenses' and a portion of the Chairman's allowance no longer be held back for expenses incurred during the year.	The IRP recommend this. This would result in greater transparency for the allowance - the Chairman would then receive all the published amount. The separate code will ensure no further ambiguity arises and that the costs incurred during the year are met from a specific code with nothing owed back to the Chairman at the end of the year
4	The temporary levels implemented by the Leader of the Council (appendix 'A' to the enclosed IRP report).	The IRP recommends that these levels be made permanent and the multipliers as set out within the Scheme be amended accordingly to reflect this.
5	No change to be made to the Basic Allowance.	<p>The IRP recommends that the current level remains unchanged at £4660.</p> <p>The IRP also recommends that at the next meeting of the IRP, it should be asked to review this allowance bearing in mind, particularly, any submissions from Councillors showing a breakdown of their main councillor activities and associated time demands for say, two separate months during the intervening period</p>
6	Link to Officer pay	That the current position be retained.

7	Payment of no more than 1 Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)	Maintain the current provision of paying 1 SRA (the highest) only.
8	Number of SRA payments to Members	The IRP recommend that no more than 40% of Members should receive an SRA payment. (The Panel are mindful of the existing number of Members who receive SRA payments and the comments set out in the HMRC guidance document on members' allowances referred to in the attached IRP report)
9	SRA payment for being a member of the Planning Committee	The IRP recommend that this be withdrawn from the Scheme and be replaced by number 10 below
10	SRA Payment of £50 per site visit attendance for members of the Planning Committee	The IRP recommend that this provision be introduced to the Scheme and replace the existing SRA payment to Planning Committee members to encourage attendance at site visits for planning applications.
11	SRA Payment of £50 per meeting attendance for Licensing Panel members	The IRP recommend that this provision be introduced to the Scheme, in light of the Panel meetings being in office hours and their length.
12	Carer's allowance	The level of the allowance be maintained at no less than the minimum wage, as it is from time to time.

Next Steps

9. Subject to the views of the Committee, the proposed recommendations from the IRP will proceed to full Council at their next meeting on 14 December 2015. Any amendments agreed to the Scheme would then be implemented with immediate effect.

Background Papers

The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003;
Relevant papers from the review held in Democratic Services;