

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL:

WEDNESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2019

SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES FOR 2019/2020

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

(Contact: Keith Butler, Tel: (01993) 861521)

1. PURPOSE

To consider the report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for the allowances to be applicable for the financial year 2019/2020.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) That the Council considers the report and recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel as set out in the [Appendix](#) to this report, and specified in paragraph 3.4 below; and
- (b) That the section 151 officer be authorised to amend the scheme of allowances as formally set out in Part 6 of the Council's Constitution to reflect any changes made as a result of (a) above.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The report of the Independent Remuneration Panel is attached as an [Appendix](#) to this report. It is anticipated that Members of the Panel will be present at the Council meeting, and that its Chairman will be able to answer questions on any points of clarification required.
- 3.2. As required by the legislation, public notice of the report and its main recommendations has been given, and the report is available for inspection by members of the public both at the Council's Offices and via the Council's website (via www.westoxon.gov.uk/councillors). Copies may be provided on payment of the charge previously agreed by the Council (£1.75 plus VAT).
- 3.3. The scheme has to apply with effect from the beginning of the financial year 2019/2020.
- 3.4. The recommendations from the Panel are that:
 - (i) there should be an increase in the basic allowance for 2019/2020 from £4,700 to £4,800 pa;
 - (ii) special responsibility allowances should be increased by the same percentage, with rounding, and as set out in the [schedule of recommendations](#) in the Panel's report;
 - (iii) subsistence allowances should continue to be payable at the same rate as for Council/Publica staff and may therefore be increased with effect from April or otherwise during the financial year; and
 - (iv) no other changes are recommended to be made to the rates of allowances and expenses for 2019/2020.
- 3.5. The recommended increase in the basic allowance is 2% (rounded up to the nearest £10) and is in line with the headline national employer offer to be effective from 1 April 2019.

4. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

As stated above, the Council has to take the recommendations of the Independent Panel into account in determining a scheme, but it can make different decisions as it sees fit, subject to any detailed requirements of the Allowances Regulations.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Assuming the Panel's recommendations are agreed the total projected cost of Members' allowances in 2019/2020 is £359,400 based on a Cabinet comprising the Leader, Deputy Leader and four others. This figure also assumes that all SRAs will be payable, which will not be the case if any Cabinet Member holds more than one position which attracts an SRA.

5.2. In bottom line terms, the Members Allowances of £359,400 plus the projected overhead costs of National Insurance (£9,700) gives a total budget requirement of £369,100. The change will result in budget growth of approximately £4,000 above resources proposed in the draft 2019/20 budget. The additional sum will be built into the 2019/20 budget papers should Council accept the recommendations in this report.

6. REASONS

The recommendations contained in this report are put forward to meet the statutory duties placed on the Council (a) to approve a scheme of allowances for the next financial year; and (b) in doing so, to have regard to the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel.

Keith Butler
Head of Democratic Services
(Author: Keith Butler, Tel: (01993) 861521; EMail: keith.butler@westoxon.gov.uk)

Date: 17 December 2018

Background Papers:
None.

The Recommendations of West Oxfordshire District Council's Independent Remuneration Panel of Members' Allowances for the Financial Year 2019/2020

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council is required under *The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021)* to appoint and maintain a Panel to advise on an annual basis the level of allowances payable to District Councillors. This Panel is independent of the Council and representative of the communities within the area that the local authority serves. The Council, before the beginning of each year must publish a scheme for the payment of a basic allowance for councillors and shall also make provision for special responsibility allowances, dependants' carers' allowance, travelling and subsistence, and payments to co-opted members. This scheme of Allowances was designed to ensure that the allowances were set at levels that fairly reflected the responsibilities and workload that members were required to undertake. Before the Council makes or amends the scheme they must have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Panel first commissioned in 2001, is made up of four members, Susan Corrigan, Janet Eustace, Margaret Watts and Michael Ryan (Chair). The Panel is grateful for the assistance given by Keith Butler, Head of Democratic Services, in enabling the undertaking of this review.

A number of previous Panel reports and other information can be found on www.westoxon.gov.uk/councillors

The Panel met on 11 November and 4 December 2018.

Preface to the Review Findings.

The Panel met in November to consider the allowances to be paid to District Councillors for the year commencing April 2019. For the last three years the Panel has essentially reflected Central Government's cautious approach to public sector pay increases, and we have continued this approach in regard to this year's consideration of these allowances.

We were as always willing to receive any views or proposals from District Councillors and are grateful to Councillor James Mills, Leader of the Council, for finding time to come and speak to us in early December

In addition to considering a general increase the Panel also reviewed the posts that receive Special Responsibility Allowances and considered whether other more recent commitments should also be listed for inclusion as a special responsibility.

Review Considerations and Recommendations for 2018/19

Basic Allowance

The Panel recommends that the Basic Allowance should again be increased in line with staff awards. If this figure is confirmed as 2% this will lift the current payment from £4,700 to £4,800, when rounded up, with effect from April 2019.

Special Responsibility Allowance

Special Responsibility Allowances recognise the additional responsibilities and workload undertaken by the Leader, his Deputy, members of the Cabinet, and the Chairs of various Committees listed in the current scheme. The Panel recommends the same percentage increase as the Basic Allowance, again rounded to a simple figure. For a cabinet member, using the same percentage agreed for the basic allowance, this payment would rise from £11,750 to £12,000.

The Panel received a representation that Councillors involved with the Oxfordshire Growth Board and Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal should be considered for inclusion in the

Special Responsibility Allowance, and this request was discussed at some length. It was decided that this should be deferred until a better appreciation of the level of additional workload and responsibilities could be established by the Panel, and will be considered in detail again next year.

The Panel continues to recommend that the restrictions for Members of the Cabinet to receive only one SRA, and those entitled to receive more than one SRA to be limited to a maximum limit of £12,000 should remain in place.

This recommended percentage increase is carried through for all posts which receive Special Responsibility Allowances, and are listed in the [schedule of recommended allowances](#) at the end of this report.

Travel, Subsistence and other Expenses

The Panel continues to recommend in relation to travel that the mileage rate is that as set by the Inland Revenue's non-profit making rate that currently remains at 45p/mile. All other allowable travel claims to remain as currently set.

Claims for subsistence should remain as applicable to staff.

Dependant Carers' Allowance.

The Panel continues to believe they are in line with similar allowances in other Councils and recommends no change for the coming year.

Co-opted Members' Allowances.

The Panel is of the opinion that there should be no changes to their level of allowance or payments.

In Conclusion

The Panel trusts the Council will find favour with these recommendations when the scheme is considered at its meeting in January 2019.

M. Ryan
Panel Chair

December 2018

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND SCHEDULE OF CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED BASIC AND SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES

Recommendations

The Panel recommends: (i) the payment of basic and special responsibility allowances as set out in the Table below; and (ii) that no other changes are made to the Council's Scheme of Allowances, meaning that mileage for approved duties will remain at the Inland Revenue non-profit rate, currently 45p per mile; subsistence will remain at the rate for Staff; and no change in relation to allowances for Dependant Carers and co-optees.

Table of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances

POSITION	CURRENT	PROPOSED	TOTAL (inc BASIC)
Basic Allowance (all members)	£4,700	£4,800	
Leader of Council	£21,150	£21,600	£26,400
Deputy Leader	£14,100	£14,400	£19,200
Cabinet Member	£11,750	£12,000	£16,800
Chairman of Council	£4,700	£4,800	£9,600
Chairmen of O&S Committees	£4,700	£4,800	£9,600
Chairmen of Area Planning Sub-Committees	£5,875	£6,000	£10,800
Chairman of Development Control Committee	£1,175	£1,200	£6,000
Chairman of Licensing Committee	£1,175	£1,200	£6,000
Chairman of Audit & GP Committee	£1,175	£1,200	£6,000
Chairman of Misc. Licensing Committee	£585	£600	£5,400
Opposition Group Leader	£1,175 *	£1,200	£6,000

* currently there are two opposition groups, with eight and six members respectively. The SRA increases by the basic amount when there are six, 11, 16 etc members in the applicable political group, so both currently receive £2,350 pa.