



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	Council – Wednesday 20 January 2021
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 9
Subject	Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2021 to 2022
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council Email: michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Keith Butler Head of Democratic Services Tel: 01993 861521 Email: keith.butler@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for the allowances to be applicable for the financial year 2021/2022.
Annexes	Annex 1 – Report and recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel for 2021/2022
Recommendations	<p>(a) That the Council considers the report and recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel as set out in Annex 1 to this report, and specified in paragraph 2.3 below;</p> <p>(b) That, in the event of the Council approving the recommendations from the Panel and of any pay award for staff not being in place at the start of the financial year 2021/2022, the increases for Councillors be backdated to 1 April 2021; and</p> <p>(c) That, in the event of any changes arising to the scheme of allowances, the section 151 officer be authorised to amend the scheme as formally set out in Part 6 of the Council's Constitution to reflect those changes.</p>
Corporate priorities	N/A
Key Decision	N/A
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	None

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The report of the Independent Remuneration Panel is attached as [Annex I](#) to this report. It is anticipated that Members of the Panel will be in attendance at the Council meeting, and that its Chair will be able to answer questions on any points of clarification required.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. 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. Copies may be provided on payment of the charge previously agreed by the Council (£1.75 plus VAT).
- 2.2. The scheme has to apply with effect from the beginning of the financial year 2021/2022.
- 2.3. The recommendations from the Panel are that:
- (i) There should be an increase in the basic and special allowances for 2021/2022 to match the main staff pay award;
 - (ii) Subsistence allowances should continue to be payable at the same rate as for Council/Public staff and may therefore be increased with effect from April or otherwise during the financial year; and
 - (iii) No other changes are recommended to be made to allowances scheme for 2021/2022.
- 2.4. It is expected that only lower paid staff will receive a pay award from 1 April 2021. Thus the Panel has recommended that Councillors receive the same as the "main" staff award, in the knowledge that that may be zero.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. Assuming no changes, the total projected cost of Members' allowances in 2021/2022 is £378,560 based on a Cabinet comprising the Leader, Deputy Leader and five 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.
- 3.2. In bottom line terms, the Members Allowances of £378,560 plus the projected overhead costs of National Insurance (£11,100) gives a total budget requirement of £389,660. The change will result in budget growth of £6,760 above resources proposed in the draft 2021/22 budget. The shortfall will be built-into the 2021/22 budget papers, should Council accept the recommendations in this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None.

5. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

- 5.1. 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.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1. None

The Recommendations of West Oxfordshire District Council's Independent Remuneration Panel of Members' Allowances for the Financial Year 2021/22

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 financial year must publish a scheme for the payment of a basic allowance for councillors and shall also make provision for a special responsibility allowance, 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, it shall have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Panel, first commissioned in 2001, is currently 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 at <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/about-the-council/councillors-and-committees/allowances-for-district-councillors/>

Due to the Coronavirus constraints three members of the Panel, Margaret Watts, Janet Eustace and Michael Ryan, conducted an audio meeting by telephone together with Keith Butler on the 1 December 2020. Their proposed recommendations were forwarded to the Leader of the District Council, Councillor Michele Mead, for any observations she might wish to make.

Preface to the Review Findings.

This year, due to the global pandemic of the Corona virus, has been an inordinately difficult year to follow the well-worn practices of our structured way of life in almost every sphere, and equally so for the Allowances Panel with our meeting being much later than normal.

One unexpected advantage of the later meeting was that the Panel met the week following the Spending Review when the Chancellor announced a pay pause for public sector workers.

In recent years the Panel, after a time when the general structure and a fair level of payments had been established, has tended to follow the lead of Central Government by recommending the increasing of allowances in line with staff pay awards; and so in the current year an expected 2.5% increase for 2020/21 used to set the allowances was adjusted to 2.75% when the pay award was finalised.

This year, contrary to previous years, we were unable to invite the views of Councillors prior to our meeting, due to the time constraints caused by the pandemic, but we trust the Panel will return to a more normal procedure and time frame in 2021.

Review Considerations and Recommendations for 2021/22

Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances

The Panel recommends that (i) in the event of there being no pay award for staff paid above the threshold referenced by the Chancellor, there should be no increases in Basic or Special Responsibility Allowances in line with the pay pause announced by the Chancellor; but (ii) in the event of there being a main pay award, all allowances should be increased by the same percentage, subject to minor rounding, and to be effective from 1 April 2021.

A no change situation will result in the following:

POSITION	2020/21	2021/22
Basic Allowance (all members)	£4,932	£4,932
Leader of Council	£22,194	£22,194
Deputy Leader	£14,796	£14,796
Cabinet Member	£12,330	£12,330
Chairman of Council	£4,932	£4,932
Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees	£4,932	£4,932
Chairmen of Area Planning Sub-Committees	£6,165	£6,165
Chairman of Development Control Committee	£1,233	£1,233
Chairman of Licensing Committee	£1,233	£1,233
Chairman of Audit & GP Committee	£1,233	£1,233
Chairman of Misc. Licensing Committee	£616.50	£616.50
Opposition Group Leaders	£2,466	£2,466

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 continues to be set at 45p/mile. All other allowable travel claims to remain as currently set.

Claims for subsistence should remain as applicable to Local Authority 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 2021.

M. Ryan
Panel Chair
December 2020