

Annex A- Report of the West Oxfordshire District Council Independent Remuneration Panel

West Oxfordshire District Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) met on Monday 20 April on the request of full council. The context to this meeting was related to changes that the Council had made to its structure of Planning Committees, merging the two area planning sub-committees into a single Development Management Sub-Committee. The Council's IRP met to discuss any changes to Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) that would be relevant to consider in the context of this change.

Chair's allowance/ one member/ one special responsibility allowance SRA rule

The Independent Remuneration Panel noted that the Council does not operate a "one member, one SRA" rule, which is something that many councils operate. Officers explained to the IRP that a reason for not having a one member/one SRA rule was due to the structure of operating two planning sub-committees under a "parent" committee. Due to this, existing practice is for the chair of one of the two sub-committees to also chair the 'parent' committee, both roles which attract an SRA. The IRP recommended that the Council ask the IRP to review this going forward, with a view of potentially introducing a one member/ one SRA rule.

The IRP considered the responsibility and workload of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the new Development Management Sub-Committee. The amount of responsibility that the single sub-committee would hold would increase compared to the existing structure. However, the IRP concluded that while the workload for the chair may increase due to the committee restructure, it was insufficiently clear at this stage whether this would be to such a degree as to warrant a change to the SRA (currently set at 1.25x basic allowance). The IRP therefore recommends that this be looked at in the autumn, when it is due to review the full scheme. At this point it will be clear what impact the changes to the national scheme of delegation, and to the committee restructure, would have to the workload of the committee chairs. If the IRP decide to recommend increasing the Chair's allowance, it could also consider recommend backdating to the start of the civic year. This also allows the IRP to review this in tandem with the review on whether to adopt a one member/ one SRA rule.

The IRP noted that in the new committee structure it would be advisable for the Chair of the Development Management Sub-Committee and the chair of the "parent" Strategic Planning Committee to not be the same person. This is because the 24-

Member Strategic Planning Committee acts as the review body for decisions taken by the 12-Member Sub-Committee. However, the IRP also noted that the Council will need to review this model in view of expected national changes which will cap the size of a planning meeting at a maximum of 13 members.

Vice-Chair's allowances

The IRP noted that the vice-chairs of planning meetings do not currently receive an SRA, whereas the vice-chairs of Council and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee do. Considering the increased workload and/or responsibility for the sub-committee, the Independent Remuneration Panel considered it appropriate to recommend that the Vice-Chair of the Development Management Sub-Committee be paid an SRA of 0.25x basic allowance effective from the start of the 2026/27 civic year. For completeness, this amount will be reviewed in the autumn, alongside the Chair's allowance.