



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	COUNCIL – 22 MARCH 2023
Subject	Report and Recommendations from the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel.
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Elizabeth Griffiths – Chief Finance Officer, Section 151 Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer. Email: elizabeth.griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk
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Summary/Purpose	To outline the findings and recommendations of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel regarding Member's Allowances.
Annexes	Annex A – Annual Report and Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel 2023. Annex B – Draft Allowances Scheme 2023-27
Recommendations	<i>Council is recommended to resolve to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>1. Note the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Annex A);</i><i>2. Thank the Independent Remuneration Panel for their work;</i><i>3. Agree that a backdated uplift of 4.04% will be applied to members' allowances for the 2022/23 financial year.</i><i>4. Adopt the Draft Allowances Scheme 2023-27 (Annex B), or an amended version of it.</i><i>5. Note that if Council adopts a multi-year allowances scheme the Independent Remuneration Panel will hold a mid-term review.</i>

	<i>6. Instruct officers to produce a business case for issuing electronic devices to members.</i>
Corporate Priorities	Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Members Questionnaire disseminated by Democratic Services.

I. BACKGROUND

By law, the Council is required to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), which recommends the level of allowances for Councillors. The Panel is made up of three persons who are suitably skilled members of the public who are independent of the District Council. Members of the Panel have proven knowledge and experience of being appointed to an IRP, and making representations to Councils as appropriate. The Panel's report is attached at Annex A for consideration by the Council.

- 1.1 The Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require local authorities to review their Allowances Schemes and to appoint Independent Remuneration Panels to consider and make recommendations on new schemes. The Government's "Guidance on Consolidated Regulations on Local Authority Allowances" outlines the main statutory provisions and gives non-statutory guidance.
- 1.2 The Panel recommends the basic allowance (paid to all councillors), special responsibility allowances (SRA), and other allowances (e.g. for travel, subsistence, dependent carers, and co-optees' allowances). The Panel's recommendations are included in the Panel's report which is attached at Annex A.

2. DRAFT ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2023-27

- 2.1 The IRP took a statistical approach in comparing the allowances to the average for district councils in the South East England region. The IRP concluded that the level of the basic allowance was too low and that the level of special responsibility allowances paid to executive members were too high.
- 2.2 The IRP has recommended that a backdated pay uplift of 4.04% is applied to members' allowances for the 2022/23 financial year. For 2023/24 and the four subsequent years, uplifts would be linked to the national pay award for local government employees. For 2023/24 only if the national pay award is below 6% then allowances would rise by 6%.
- 2.3 The IRP recommend that some changes are made to special responsibility allowances (SRAs) compared to the Council's most recent Members' Allowances scheme. SRAs are calculated

as multiples of the basic allowance and the IRP recommend the following changes to bring these allowances more in line with the district council average for the South East England region:

- SRA for Leader to reduce from 4.5x basic allowance to 4.0x basic allowance
- SRA for Deputy Leader to reduce from 3.0x basic allowance to 2.5x basic allowance
- SRA for Members of the Executive (excluding Leader and Deputy Leader) to reduce from 2.5x basic allowance to 2.0x basic allowance.

- 2.4** The IRP recommend that the SRA for the Chair of Scrutiny should remain at 1.0x basic allowance for a single Chair of Scrutiny but if this role is held by two or more members the multiple should reduce to 0.5x basic allowance.
- 2.5** The IRP considered the need to make the role of councillor inclusive to people with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. The IRP identified that one way in which an allowances scheme could make a potentially useful intervention, would be by including provision for maternity or adoption leave for members with special responsibilities.
- 2.6** The IRP also considered whether members should be paid a separate allowance for ICT costs to enable members to purchase a device on which to access their councillor email account and meeting papers. The IRP concluded that the Council should instead consider the business case for issuing electronic devices to members directly.
- 2.7** Following the IRP meeting on 27 February 2023, officers have produced a draft allowances scheme based on the Panel's recommendations. The Draft Members' Allowances Scheme is attached at Annex B. Council is recommended to adopt the Draft Scheme subject to any amendments that are considered and passed at the Council meeting.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1** Council is required to have regard to the recommendations of the IRP but it is open to any member of Council to propose amendments to the Draft Scheme which is attached at Annex B.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** The Council's budget will be updated as required once a new allowances scheme has been passed by Council. The IRP has proposed that allowances are indexed to staff pay for a four year period which will provide clarity for future budget setting processes.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The Council is required by regulations to make a scheme for the allowances to be paid to members before the beginning of each year. A scheme must include provisions for paying a basic allowance, special responsibility allowances, dependants' carers' allowance, travelling and subsistence allowance and co-optees' allowance. Schemes. A scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index but may not rely on an index for a period of more than four years.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel considered issues of equality and diversity and have recommended a specific intervention aimed at promoting equalities which is the adoption of a maternity and adoption scheme for councillors.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel noted that the Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency. With this in mind the Panel has recommended that the Council seeks to move to “paper-light” meetings and considers the provision of electronic devices for councillors to access meeting packs as an alternative to paper copies.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

(ENDS)