

Date of meeting:	18 September 2023
Title of Report:	Independent Remuneration Panel – Recommendations for amendments to the Councillor Allowance Scheme
Lead Strategic Director:	Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive)
Author:	Ross Jago (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk)
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Your Reference:	IRP.23.24
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

All Councils are required to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). In line with statutory guidance, the local panel provides independent advice to the Council about its overall remuneration scheme and the amounts payable to elected members.

This report has been compiled and agreed by members of the Panel following meetings and consideration of the relevant issues between July and September 2023. The Head of Governance Performance and Risk attended the meetings to assist the Panel in consideration of these matters.

The Panel was asked to undertake a full review of Councillors' allowances, informed by benchmarking and other relevant information and specifically to consider –

- allowances paid to the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor (particularly in reference to costs);
- the list of approved duties and training allowances;
- whether co-optees should receive remuneration;
- levels of payment to Leaders of Minority Groups and any associated thresholds; and
- facilities for Minority Groups and Independent Councillors.

The Panel considered the following as part of the review:

- Comparative evidence of Councillors' Allowances from 14 of the Council's 'family group', (statistical neighbours as defined by Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)).
- Evidence from eight 'local/coastal' comparator Councils;
- An anonymised analysis of responses to a questionnaire devised and circulated on behalf of the Panel to all Councillors;
- Interviews with a range of Councillors.

The report outlines the panel's considerations in developing the recommendations detailed below.

Recommendations and Reasons

That Council approve the following amendments to the allowance scheme, that –

1. There are no changes to the Basic Councillors' Allowance and that this will continue to rise in line with staff pay awards. As pay awards currently being negotiated refer to a single consolidated addition to NJC pay points, the Panel recommends that basic allowances should increase in line with the equivalent percentage increase to the mid-point of the pay spine (pay point 22).
2. Excluding payments to Other Minority Group Leaders (recommendation 6 below), there are no changes to the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) which will increase in line with staff pay awards (as above).
3. The travel allowance for Councillors should remain the same as the locally agreed rates payable to Council staff, and that they be changed as and when the staff rates are changed.
4. The list of approved duties is applicable to both Travel and Subsistence Allowance and Dependent Carers Allowances and Councillors undertaking approved duties may claim Travel, Subsistence and Dependent carers allowance unless remuneration and/or expenses are provided by the body to which the approved duty relates.
5. An annual stipend of £1500 is provided to Co-opted Members on Committees convened under the Local Government Act 1972.
6. SRAs for Other Minority Group Leaders (excluding the largest opposition group) will be payable based on the number of members in the group. For groups of less than five members, the Leader of the group will receive an annual SRA of £1000, increasing by £1000 for every five additional Councillors.
7. Facilities (group rooms etc) are offered to all Councillors. Groups with less than 5 members will share facilities with similar sized groups and non-aligned independent Councillors.
8. An expenses fund not exceeding £2000 be established in the Lord Mayor's office to cover necessary out of pocket expenses incurred by the Deputy Lord Mayor in the event that they are in receipt of a SRAs for another role and are therefore unable to claim the Deputy Lord Mayor's allowance. Any claims from the fund will be made on receipt.

Alternative options considered and rejected

None – A full review of the allowance scheme was required to comply with regulation in reference to the index linking of allowances to staff pay awards.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

None directly arising.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Based on the current proportionality of the Council and the number of co-optees in post, the annual total cost of the scheme will be £404,913, delivering an annual saving of £14,952 against the current scheme.

The total cost of the scheme is likely to vary each year and is subject to number of co-optees in post and changes to the political composition of the Council.

Financial Risks

None as a result of this report.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

None as a result of this report.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

Key strategies, procedures and plans relating to health and safety, risk management and child poverty will be updated where necessary to reflect any relevant revisions to the Corporate Plan.

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

None as a result of this report.

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Independent Remuneration Panel – Recommendations for amendments to the Councillor Allowance Scheme.							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Giles Perritt

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 07/09/2023