

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

Report Title	Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Members' Allowances) to Stroud District Council			
Purpose of Report	This report sets out the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel's review of the Members' Scheme of Allowances.			
Decision(s)	Council RESOLVES: a) To consider the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel and approve the recommendations, summarised in section 4 of this report, and set out in full in the Panel's report (Appendix A); and b) To agree to make alternative provision for the Members' Scheme of Allowances taking account of the Independent Remuneration Panel's report.			
Consultation and Feedback	All members were invited to respond to a survey on the current Scheme of Allowances, responses to this survey and separate interviews held with several Members informed the Panel's recommendations.			
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Options	1. Accept all recommendations 2. Accept some but not all recommendations or amend them as appropriate 3. Not accept any of the recommendations			
Background Papers	Current Members' Scheme of Allowances			
Appendices	Appendix A – Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Members' Allowances) to Stroud District Council			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	No	No

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In accordance with the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, the council is required to make a scheme for the payment of Allowances to Members. In doing so, the council must establish an Independent Remuneration Panel

(IRP) to review the Members' Allowance Scheme and report its recommendations which the council must have regard to.

- 1.2 The aim of the IRP's review is to ensure that the Members' Allowance Scheme is fit for purpose and reduces financial barriers to being an elected Member while ensuring the remuneration and expenses received by elected Members represent value for money.
- 1.3 The last full review of the Stroud District Council Members' Allowance Scheme was in 2016 although the Panel did convene in 2020 to conduct a full review, this was postponed until now because of the impact of the pandemic and to allow newly elected councillors to settle into their role before providing feedback on the Scheme of Allowances. The Panel conducted an interim review in February 2021 and Council agreed to adopt the Panel's recommendation in relation to Members' ICT allowance.

2. PANEL MEMBERSHIP

- 2.1 Members of the IRP have been appointed by Council and are shared with Gloucester City Council. The Panel comprises the following members:
 - Mr Graham Russell (Chair)
 - Mr Chris Markley
 - Ms Kim Hawkins
 - Mr John Morris
- 2.2 The Council wishes to thank the Panel members who are appointed on a voluntary basis, for giving up their time to conduct the review and produce their report and recommendations.

3. CONSULTATION AND FEEDBACK

- 3.1 At the outset of the review, the Panel were provided with the current political make-up and political management arrangements of the council and benchmarking data on allowances paid by other councils with a committee system and a similar make up to Stroud District Council.
- 3.2 Throughout the process of the review, the Panel has sought feedback on the current scheme and invited councillors to discuss this with them. A survey was circulated to members in April 2022 and twenty two responses were received.
- 3.3 The Panel met with all members who indicated they would be happy to discuss their views with the Panel, other members holding particular positions were separately invited to an interview with the IRP. The IRP met with members of all political groups and interviewed 11 members, including the Leader, Deputy Leader and Committee Chairs.
- 3.4 The information reviewed by the Panel is available from Democratic Services.

4 PANEL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Panel's report, including its findings and recommendations is appended to this report at Appendix A. The Panel considered the overall level of allowances; the remuneration package as a whole; issues that were of concern to the Panel and any other issues that

had been drawn to their attention by councillors. The key principles of the review and review methodology are outlined within the report.

4.2 The Panel make a total of 30 recommendations which are set out in bold in the report and the main findings and recommendations of the Panel are:

- i) The Basic Allowance for 2022/23 be set at £5,976 with an incremental increase of £250 per year for the next three years so the Basic Allowance increases per year as follows:
 - a. 2023/24: £5,976 + £250 = £6,226
 - b. 2024/25: £6,226 + £250 = £6,476
 - c. 2025/26: £6,476 + £250 = £6,726The annual staff award is not applied to the Basic Allowance during this period and only the fixed increment is added;
- ii) A special responsibility allowance (SRA) for the Leader of Council be set at £11,952 (200% of the Basic Allowance)
- iii) A SRA is introduced for the Deputy Leader of the Council to be set at £5,976 (100% of the Basic Allowance)
- iv) The SRA for the Chairs of the Service Committees, Development Control Committee and Audit and Standards Committee be set at £6,574 (110% of the Basic Allowance);
- v) The SRA for the Vice Chairs of Service Committees, Development Control Committee and Audit and Standards Committee be set at £2,390 (40% of the Basic Allowance);
- vi) The SRA for the Chair of Council be set at £3,586 (60% of the Basic Allowance) and the SRA for the Vice Chair be set at £598 (10% of the Basic Allowance);
- vii) Group Leader allowances are calculated on the basis of both governance responsibility and group size and the criteria that a 5 member minimum size for a Group Leader to receive an allowance is removed;
- viii) The principle of only one SRA per member be continued;
- ix) Consideration should be given to how the functional lead role at member level could be developed the Chairs of Service Committees to make them more visibly accountable and engaged in leading and monitoring service development and delivery.
- x) A clear structural and constitutional framework for member champions is established;
- xi) No changes are made to travel allowances and a small uplift is made to subsistence allowances with a ceiling cap of £22 per day in line with HMRC practice.
- xii) Dependent care expenses are met on the basis of actual costs incurred; and
- xiii) Implementation of all recommendations with effect from 1st April, 2022.

4.3 The report of the IRP was written at a time when the political make up of the council was different to the current make up but this does not affect any of the recommendations made.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

The financial implications of the proposed changes are shown in the table at Paragraph 100 of Appendix A. The estimated additional cost is £28k for 2022/23.

Inflation on Members Allowances of 2.5% was included in the Medium Term Financial Plan (approximately £9k). Therefore, an additional £19k will be added into the MTFP at its next consideration by members if this decision is approved.

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5.2 Legal Implications

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) England Regulations 2003 (as amended) require a local authority to review its members' allowances at least once every four years.

Before any changes are made to the scheme the Council must have regard to the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel and determine whether or not it should accept the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

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5.3 Equality Implications

Public sector equality duties have been considered by the IRP as part of their recommendations. One of the purposes of reviewing the Scheme of Allowances is to ensure that the scheme in all its aspects does not serve to create or perpetuate barriers to any person entering public office or assuming a particular role on the Council.

5.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.