

Submission to the Independent Remuneration Panel

To assist the deliberations of the remuneration panel we as the Conservative Group making up 29 of the 39 District Councillors should like to make the following submission.

This submission is based on;

- The move towards becoming a digital council which will greatly reduce the need for paper reports to be supplied to members but where members will be required to have access to the internet, computer hardware and printers. The 'Channel shift' saving associated with this policy has been estimated to save some £77,000 (£19250 per annum) over a four year period.
- Blaby District Council, unlike many others, does not supply computer hardware to its members.
- It is felt sensible to discontinue paying travelling expenses, to and from, the Council offices to avoid the need for members to claim and the associated costs of processing. Whilst we are fortunate that the majority of members choose not to claim these expenses this may not always be the case and having a basic allowance that reflects this will future proof any growth in such expenses. It is estimated that some 50% of all travel expenses totalling some £2000 would be saved. Travel, to and from, other locations whilst on approved council business will still be available to claim in the normal way.
- Councillors pensions are now no longer available and whilst not all councillors took advantage of the scheme there has been a reduction in councillors costs, due to this policy change, of £10,886.
- The greatly increased workload being placed on the majority of those receiving a Special Responsibility Allowance with the subsequent time commitment that is now required due to the challenges facing local government.
- As far as possible bringing allowances into line with the time and commitment required to fulfil the role.
- Whilst we all fully accept that Councillors should never be overly rewarded for engaging in public service there is nevertheless a case to be made in providing a slightly higher level of compensation which will hopefully assist in attracting more employed members going forward.

We are therefore proposing the following changes which would still provide for a net overall saving in costs to the council

Our suggestion is as follows;

Basic Allowance £4600 (current allowance £4093)

Special Responsibility Allowances;

Leader £12250 (current allowance £10977)

Deputy Leader £8000 (current allowance £7135)

Cabinet member £6150 (current allowance £5488)

Opposition Group Leader £3600 (current allowance £3293)

Chair of Scrutiny Commissioners £4500 (current allowance £4390)

Scrutiny Commissioners £3700 (current allowance £3293)

No change is recommended for Chair and Vice Chair of planning being £4390 and £1098 respectively.

Youth Champion £1098 - this is a role that previously had a special allowance.

Members were also concerned about the possibility of any one member being able to claim more than one special responsibility allowance and therefore in line with several councils but drawing on the wording from Charnwood Borough Council it is further proposed that where any Councillor is in receipt of more than one Special Responsibility Allowance they should receive 100% of the highest allowance and 50% of any subsequent allowance.

The overall increase in cost of the new allowances would be £22369 which is more than covered by total savings in each year of £32136 which is made up of 'Channel Shift' £18250, Pension contribution £10886 and travel expenses of circa £2,000.

This proposal would provide a year on year saving to the council of circa £10,000 and would future proof the council against rises in postage, printing costs and no of members claiming travel expenses.

We believe this is a fair and balanced proposal that recognises the needs to compensate councillors to a slightly higher level for the reasons covered above but fully recognises the financial strains currently facing the council and that this is, after all, council tax payers money.

David Clements

Conservative Chief Whip

(on behalf of all 29 Conservative Councillors)