

**Blaby District Council
Council**

Date of Meeting	30 January 2024
Title of Report	Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel
	This is not a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan
Report Author	Executive Director – Communities
Corporate Priority	All Priorities: A Place to Live; A Place to Work; A Place to Visit; People Strategy; Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

1. What is this report about?

- 1.1 To advise Members of Council of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

2. Recommendation(s) to Council

- 2.1 That the recommendations detailed in Paragraph 4.2 are approved and are applicable from the May 2023 Annual Council and that the increase in allowances are backdated accordingly.
- 2.2 That the Member Allowances Scheme in the Constitution be amended.

3. Reason for Decisions Recommended

- 3.1 The Panel considered the Special Responsibility Allowances and the views of Councillors and determined that changes should be made to the Allowances and the Scheme.
- 3.2 It is appropriate for the Independent Remuneration Panel to ensure that the Members' Allowances Scheme is reviewed on a regular basis and that the allowances payable to Members are appropriate.

4. Matters to consider

- 4.1 Background

The Independent Remuneration Panel was established under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 to provide advice and recommendations to the Council on amounts to be paid under its

Members' Allowances Scheme. Members of the Panel are appointed by the Council and are independent members of the community.

The Council is required to have regard to the Panel's recommendations in determining the Member Allowances Scheme. Additionally, the Council must also publish the Panel's recommendations and conclusions, together with the approved scheme.

The Panel Members:

The Panel consisted of the following:

- Stephen Knott
- Anne Senior

Regulations stipulate that Members of the Panel must not be a Member of the Council, or of a Sub-Committee of the Council, or be disqualified from being a Member of an authority.

Scope of Work for the Panel:

1. Consideration of the 2022/23 Pay Award
2. To consider any amendments to the Members' Allowance Scheme from May 2023

Meetings of the Panel

To assist the Panel in its recommendations to Council, the Panel considered the following:

- Current Members Allowances Scheme
- Comparison of Local Authorities (benchmarked data)

An invitation was sent to all Councillors inviting them to provide any representations for the Panel to consider. Two verbal representations were provided to the Panel as well as 3 written representations.

General Representations:

- Commitment required in terms of time and responsibility, combined with volume of work load has increased hugely over the last 10 years for Cabinet members.
- Almost impossible to have good succession planning.
- Councillors should be compensated, but they are having to give up earning/working.
- Current Cabinet now 5 instead of 6 – lack of people who can do the role due to the commitment and impact of that. Need to treat it as a job, no longer a wellbeing volunteer.

Representations given on the SRA

- The level needs to compensate for doing the job to make it possible for them to do the job. Affordability not MP's
- Is subject to Tax
- Massive disparity between County and District councils
- Reduced to 36 members and number of residents increased to 2400-2800- per councillor.
- Struggling to find new Councillors - Is it due to remuneration?
- Not about money but compensation for what they give up.
- Cost of living also impacts on Councillors.
- Don't think Basic Allowance is far from the average.
- Leader £20k plus – 2 group leaders expressed the view that the current leader remuneration was very low for the amount of work and responsibility.
- Deputy Leader allowance should be increased
- Different views expressed on the Leader of Opposition allowance ie: if over 5 members or only if registered with the Electoral Commission
- Different views on number of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA's) from unlimited to - 2 SRA limit to ensure one person doesn't get all jobs, to test capabilities of people.
- Chair of Licensing allowance not required.
- Allowance for Chair and VC – may need to be looked at.
- Champions do have different roles/responsibilities - Youth well defined others less so, Equality and Diversity should be a more active role.
- Consider an allowance for Whip.
- Should note that all Councillors are subject to being sacked by electorate, degree of uncertainty for those in work

Next Steps

Members are required to have due regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel detailed in paragraph 4.2.

Any recommendations approved by Council in respect of the Members' Allowances Scheme will be published as is required by the Scheme.

4.2 Proposal(s)

- That the Leader's Special Responsibility Allowance be increased to £20,000 a year.
- That the Deputy Leader's Special Responsibility Allowance be increased to £13,000 a year.
- That the Cabinet Executive Members (excluding the Leader and Deputy Leader) Special Responsibility Allowance be increased to £8,000 a year.

- That no changes be made to the Chairman of Scrutiny Commission, Commissioners, Chairs or Vice Chair allowances.
- That no changes be made to the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Council allowance.
- That an attendance allowance be paid to those involved in Licensing/Regulatory Sub Committee's on the same basis as Planning Committee.
- That Member Champions be re-branded (Cabinet Support or equivalent) to be tiered role – (LEAD Role attracting £1,500 SRA and CHAMPION Role attracting £750 (Leader to determine)).
- That no change be imposed on the number of SRA's to be claimed (currently 2 – no change to current policy)
- That Opposition Group Leaders be paid a SRA if Group consists of 5 or more Members. (Note - this will remove the SRA for the Green Group Leader).

4.3 Relevant Consultations

All District Councillors were able to provide any verbal or written representations to the Panel to consider at its meeting.

4.4 Significant Issues

Legal implications:

It is a requirement of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 that an Independent Panel on Members' Allowances may decide to put forward recommendations for the Council to consider.

It is for the Council to decide on the Members' Allowances Scheme that is put in place, having regard to the Panel's recommendations.

5. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?

- 5.1 The Panel after hearing representations from 2 Group Leaders and other written representations from other Councillors, would like to stress that the cost of Councillors to the tax payer should seek to be cost neutral and any additional payments should be funded from savings from within the remuneration scheme.

5.2 **2024/25 Full Year - Savings based on anticipated budget - £11,016**

Reduction from 4 to three Portfolio Holders – £7,026

Reduction in Opposition Leader SRA - £3,990

Costs of proposal - £14,924

Increase in Leader SRA - £5,948

Increase in Deputy Leader SRA - £3,866

Increase in 3 Cabinet Member (excluding Leader and Deputy Leader) SRA - £2,920

Increase in Champion payments (assuming 2 Lead and 2 Champion) – £1,990

New Licensing attendance payment (based on 3 Sub Committees a yr) - £200

The proposal results in an approximate cost to the Authority of £3,908 for a full year taking into account the above.

Please note that the number of Opposition Leaders, the number of Portfolio Holders and the number of Champions may change over time and as such this is indicative of the current position only.

The proposal would offer savings of £13,207 if the change in the number of Basic Allowance payments are taken into account due to the reduction in 2023 from 39 to 36 Councillors, however this has already been accounted for in the 2024/25 budget position.

2023/24 Costs

The proposal seeks to back date the increase in the allowances. This will result in a cost of approximately £13,700 for 2023/24 however this will be offset from the in-year savings against the budget associated with the reduction in the number of Councillors and the reduction in the number of Portfolio Holders.

Note - These calculations are based on the current Member Allowances Scheme for 23/24 before any increase due to the National Pay Award.

6. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?

6.1 Not applicable.

7. Other options considered

7.1 None. Members are required to have due regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel when determining the Member Allowances Scheme.

8. Environmental impact

8.1 Not applicable.

9. Other significant issues

- 9.1 In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Legal Matters, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities, and Climate Local and there are no areas of concern.
- 9.2 Significant issues relating to legal implications have been addressed at paragraph 4.4.

10. Appendix

- 10.1 None.

11. Background paper(s)

- 11.1 None.

12. Report author's contact details

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