

**Blaby District Council
Council**

Date of Meeting	18 November 2025
Title of Report	Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel
Report Author	This is not a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan Senior Democratic Services & Scrutiny Officer
Strategic Themes	All Themes: Enabling communities and supporting vulnerable residents; Enhancing and maintaining our natural and built environment; Growing and supporting our economy; Keeping you safe and healthy; Ambitious and well managed Council, valuing our people

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

- 2.2 That the recommendations detailed in Paragraph 4.2 are approved and are applicable from the May 2025 Annual Council and that the increase in allowances are backdated accordingly.
- 2.3 That the Member Allowances Scheme in the Constitution be amended.

3. Reason for Decisions Recommended

- 3.1 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 (IRP) 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:

- Luke Pulford
- Anne Senior
- Louise Spiers

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:

The Panel, in considering the Members' Allowance Scheme, considered the following:

1. At a full Council meeting on Tuesday 30 January 2024, Members considered a report by the IRP. The recommendations as detailed in the report were approved, apart from one recommendation which Council asked the IRP to reconsider.

The following recommendation: *'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)'* was referred back to the Panel to enable Opposition Group Leaders and other Members to make representations on the proposal.

2. A request had also been received for the Panel to reconsider the amount payable to Planning Committee Members, in respect of duties held with attending the Committee (excluding the Chairman and Vice Chairman), currently £20 per meeting.

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) on Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) and Planning Committee Attendance payments.
- The Panel's recommendations presented to full Council meeting held on 30 January 2024, including the minutes of the meeting.

An invitation was sent to all Councillors inviting them to provide any representations for the Panel to consider. Six verbal representations were provided to the Panel as well as 1 written representation.

Representations given on Special Responsibility Allowances:

- Consensus that Councillors should be compensated appropriately for the work they do.
- Difficulty finding balance between work/family and Council commitments
- Employers can allow Councillors to take time off work to attend meetings, however this can be unpaid

Representations given on Leader of the Opposition (Minority) Group Allowance:

- There was general agreement that the Opposition Leaders allowance be retained.
- It was important that all groups were represented fairly and equally no matter their size.
- The Group Leader is still required to attend briefings with the Chief Executive, consult their group on policies, present and speak at Council and Committee's on Council policies and strategies, attend external events to represent the Council e.g. A Place to Grow, Youth Council, Planning Appeals, etc. The Group Leader needs to be seen and heard and must get involved. They will be penalised if the allowance is removed. The allowance isn't a significant amount, rather an acknowledgement of position and the extra responsibility placed on them.
- When considering the data provided to the Panel, only one other local authority had removed the allowance from the Opposition Leader.
- There was also a suggestion that a tiered approach be considered dependant on the number of members in the group.

Representations given on Audit and Corporate Governance Chairman:

- That the Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the Chair of Audit and Corporate Governance Committee (ACG) be reviewed as the data presented to the Panel showed that the current allowance was lower when compared to other local authorities.
- The agenda's for ACG Committee were long and contained fairly complex information including financial data. Several briefings were required with the Council's finance officers.
- The ACG Committee Chair is responsible for signing-off the Council's accounts and will be imperative in upcoming local government reorganisation work.

Representations given on Planning Committee Allowance:

- High expectations of Members on this committee:
 - attending annual mandatory training
 - attending additional training in the form of masterclasses,
 - the agendas can be quite long and technical and refer to key planning policies which members must be aware of
- It is a long day for members of the committee; site visit starts after lunch and then rolls into Committee which can last a few hours.
- The committee deals with contentious planning applications, leading to an increase in communication from the public. As it is a public-facing committee – it has the highest number of public attending.
- That Councillors ought to receive food/subsistence as part of their duties
- There has been no review of the current allowance since it was introduced.
- It is difficult to find Councillors to substitute on this Committee – they must have attended the mandatory training and be available for half a day.
- There should be a level of competency applied when considering who can be appointed to this committee as it requires significant training.

Other comments:

- Member Champions allowances should be reviewed depending on their work. Regular updates should be provided to Council on their work – how is their allowance determined? Does it provide value for money?

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.

The Panel would like to place on record their thanks to the officers and Members who attended the meeting to provide their advice and representations.

4.2 Proposal(s)

The Independent Remuneration Panel recommends:

Special Responsibility Allowance – Leader of Opposition (Minority) Groups

1. That the previous recommendation from the Panel '*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)*' be withdrawn. The Leader of Opposition (Minority) Group allowance will be paid to all Groups.

Reason:

The Panel were sympathetic to the representations put forward by Members and acknowledged that if the allowance was withdrawn, the Leader of a smaller minority group would still be required to carry out duties similar to other larger Group Leaders.

Special Responsibility Allowance – Chairman of Audit and Corporate Governance Committee

2. That the SRA for the Chairman of Audit and Corporate Governance Committee be increased to £2,500.

Reason:

The Panel considered the benchmarking data presented to them and the duties placed on the Chairman in the work they undertook. They also took into account the representations made from Members in support of increasing the allowance.

Allowances for Members and Substitute Members of Planning Committee

3. That the allowance for Members and Substitute Members of Planning Committee be increased to £60 (excluding the Chairman and Vice-Chairman)

Reason:

The Panel recognised the intense duties and pressure placed on Planning Committee Members in attending site visits, understanding complex information, responding to numerous calls/emails from the public and considered that as no review of the allowance had taken place since its introduction, it was comfortable in increasing it. The Panel also recommends that the allowance be index-linked, allowing gradual increases.

The Panel also took into account representations made by Members that the Committee can be a long day without any subsistence provided and considered that by increasing it to £60, this would allow Committee Members to make provision for food.

National Joint Council Staff Pay Award (NJC)

4. That the allowance for all roles be increased annually from 1st April each year thereafter to the national average pay award in line with the National Joint Council Staff Pay Award. The pay award is subject to formal approval and as such it will be applied retrospectively and back dated once agreed.

Reason:

The Panel, in considering all representations and the benchmarking data felt that linking all the roles to the NJC would be fair and equal in ensuring that all roles would receive an annual increase.

4.3 Relevant Consultations

All District Councillors were able to provide 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.

- 4.5 In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities and there are no areas of concern.

5. Environmental impact

- 5.1 No Net Zero and Climate Impact Assessment (NZCIA) is required for this report.

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

- 6.1
1. Increase in Audit and Corporate Governance Committee Chairman from £1,327.62 to £2,500.
 2. Increase in allowances to Planning Committee Members (excluding Chairman and Vice-Chairman) from £20 to £60 per meeting (x7 members)
 3. That the allowance for all roles be increased annually from 1st April each year thereafter to the national average pay award in line with the National Joint Council Staff Pay Award.

	Current year additional cost
Revenue	£3,875.75

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

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Other options considered

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

9. Appendix

9.1 There are no appendices to this report.

10. Background paper(s)

10.1 None.

11. Report author's contact details

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