

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (IRP) TO TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Introduction

The Local Government Act, 2000 required local authorities to produce a Scheme in respect of councillors' allowances. Under the Local Government (Members' allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, Councils have to set up an independent remuneration panel to make recommendations on members' allowances.

The Panel met on 8 May 2024 to:

- Consider the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for Overview and Scrutiny (OS) Chair and Vice Chair
- Review the report of the IRP2022/23 Review considered by Council November 2022 and the consequential decisions of Council.

1. Overview and Scrutiny (OS)

The Panel considered a request to review the special responsibility allowances relating to the Overview and Scrutiny function in the light of the Council's intention to reduce the committees from two to one, effective from May 2024.

On the face of it, having only one Chair and Vice Chair might imply there would be more of a focus on leading the function, including prioritisation of committee business. In its report, the Panel felt that if there was clear functional leadership, it might be looking to recommend a SRA equivalent to that of an executive member.

The Panel is pleased to note that the Council has appointed a Scrutiny Officer and that there will be a new impetus to delivering the function at both Member and Officer level. However, at this stage, it does not feel able to recommend any change to the allowance scheme and that the status quo should prevail at least in the short term.

The Panel intends to keep under review the experience of the Council in operating the new arrangements and will be seeking a review meeting in six months with all interested parties.

While we would always recommend the merits of a full role description for all SRA holders, the review meeting would at the very least require clarity from the Council on such matters as prioritisation of workload, balancing corporate and local issues, accountability to the Council for the work of the Committee and for delivering outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION 1: That no change be made to the SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the Council notes the intention of the Panel to hold a full review meeting on this matter in the light of 6 months' operation of the new arrangement; and

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the Council takes steps to provide the Panel with the evidence it requires in order to consider this matter further.

2. Chair and Vice Chair of the Council

The Panel was disappointed that the Council rejected its recommendation to separate the responsibility allowance from the support budget for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council.

The wording of the Council's resolution perpetuates the view that the full amounts quoted within the Scheme are for special responsibilities. The Panel was informed that an element of these totals was for support to the office of the Chair and Vice Chair, including expenses for civic events.

The Panel reiterates its strong view that the Scheme should more accurately and transparently reflect the nature of the totals i.e. £3,000 for the Chair's SRA and £1,000 for the Vice Chair's SRA with the balance being acknowledged as a support budget for those offices – this is in effect the status quo position.

This in no way reflects upon the nature of the roles which are rightly included in the Scheme. This will also provide a better tax position for the individual office holders.

The recommendation of the IRP at its 2022 Review and background information is set out below:

RECOMMENDATION 7: That the special responsibility allowances for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council be £3,000 and £1,000 respectively for 2023/24.

RECOMMENDATION 8: That the balance of the current allowances (£3,223 and £1,489) be transferred to the Democratic Services budget as support for the office of the Chair of the Council.

Response of the Procedures Committee Sept 2022 Recommendation 7 and 8 - Concerns regarding the proposed separation of the Chairs/Deputy of Council SRA to an allowance and a support budget; should look to compare with similar Local Authorities

IRP response Oct 2022 Recommendations 7 and 8 stand. This is not recommending a decrease but a separation to support expenses and provide an expenses allowance. It is more appropriate for the SRA and expenses to be separate, and there would be a tax benefit for the participant. A comparison with other authorities did not provide means of separation but at least one Devon authority (Exeter City Council) does split the allowance as recommended above.

3. Travel Expenses

It was noted that some Council's do not pay travel expenses, such as Exeter City Council.

4. Conclusion

The IRP intends to meet in 6 months time as set out in Paragraph 1, recommendation 2 above, to review the OS function and the OS Chair and Vice Allowances.

Travelling expenses will also be reviewed at this time.

APPENDIX

The link to previous IRP report to Council November 2022 and Minutes

[Agenda for Full Council on Tuesday, 29th November, 2022, 10.00 am - Teignbridge District Council](#)

[Minute from the Council meeting 29 Nov 2022](#)

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REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The Leader proposed the recommendations of the Procedures Committee, he clarified that the recommendations would come into effect from May 2023 after the election and he thanked the Independent Remuneration Panel for their work on the review. This was seconded by the Executive Member for Recycling, Household Waste and Environmental Health and carried.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) That the basic allowance continue to be upgraded in line with the percentage increase for LGE staff pay award for the previous year. However, for instances of a flat rate award (e.g. £1,925 each to all staff) the increase for Members Allowances be equivalent to the average percentage increase for the LGE staff pay award;
- 2) That there is no increase in the special responsibility allowance for the Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Council;
- 3) That there is no increase to the special responsibility allowances for Executive Members and the Executive Member without Portfolio;

- 4) That there be no increase in the special responsibility allowances for the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs should report to Annual Council in May 2023 on the work they have undertaken in 22/23 to enable the new Council to review the Scrutiny Structure and work of the Scrutiny committees;
- 5) The special responsibility allowances for the Chair and Deputy Chair of Council remain as the status quo and a review should be undertaken within 12 months to ascertain what Councils in Devon do in respect of this allowance and expenses;
- 6) The special responsibility allowances for the Chair and Deputy Chair of Planning remain as the status quo;
- 7) The special responsibility allowances for the Chair of Audit Scrutiny Committee remain as the status quo;
- 8) That no special responsibility allowance continue for the Vice Chair of Audit Scrutiny Committee;
- 9) That the special responsibility allowances for the Chair and Deputy Chair of Licensing and Regulatory remain as the status quo. A review of the taxi policy should be undertaken;
- 10) The special responsibility allowance for the Chair of Standards should be the same as the Chair of Audit Scrutiny Committee;
- 11) That no special responsibility allowance for the Vice Chair of Standards Committee as per the Vice Chair of Audit Scrutiny Committee;
- 12) The Independent Person(s) and independent co-opted committee persons continue to be paid £50 for a half and £100 per full day;
- 13) That the principle that any member qualifying for more than one SRA is paid the higher rate allowance only be retained;
- 14) That travel and subsistence payments for councillors be as set out in Appendix A to this report with a review to be undertaken to encourage sustainable travel;
- 15) That the present dependent care provisions in the Scheme be endorsed;
- 16) That the Parental Leave policy attached at Appendix B to this report be adopted by the Council with a review of this policy to be undertaken which will look at including foster care leave, parental leave and the requirement to ensure confidentiality with regards to the legislation for the six-month rule; and
- 17) That the present list of approved duties within the scheme be adopted with the addition of a suitable clause to enable a councillor, attending a Teignbridge District Council as an observer rather than as a member of the body, to claim relevant expenses.