

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 undertook a full review from September 2024 following the deferment of the Panel's interim report to Council 30 July 2024. The Panel met several times to review the Scheme for 2025/26. These meetings included interviews with councillors.

The review process included the basic and all special responsibility allowances (SRA), travel and subsistence, care provision for dependents, and a comparison of allowances paid by neighbouring Devon and south-west authorities.

The Panel acknowledged that Teignbridge District Council, like other Councils, is facing an extremely challenging financial situation and any increases in allowances would have to be carefully considered.

In submitting this report, the Panel wishes to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the Democratic Services officers in offering clear advice, guidance and support for this review. We are also indebted to those councillors who offered evidence to the Panel through interviews.

The Panel made recommendations for the following allowances:

Overview and Scrutiny (O&S)

The Panel recognises that there is a changing culture within the Council regarding the approach to, and significance of, this statutory function. The single committee is likely to increase pressure on the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee to manage the work programme, lead the scrutiny of the Executive and manage the capacity of the Committee to engage in policy development and review. The Panel is of the view that the present remuneration of these member roles is not sustainable within the changed culture. Accordingly, it is the Panel's recommendation that the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) for the Chair and Vice Chair should be set respectively at £9,334 (1.5 x Basic Allowance (BA) and equal to that of an Executive Member) and £3,111 (0.5 x basic Allowance and equal to other Vice Chair positions) both with effect from 1st April, 2025.

RECOMMENDATION 1

With effect from 1 April 2025, the allowance for Chair of O&S be increased from 1.1 x BA to 1.5 x BA to recognise the statutory role that scrutiny performs and the only body that can effectively call the Executive to account.

RECOMMENDATION 2

With effect from the 1 April 2025, the allowance for Vice Chair of O & S should be increased from 0.3 x BA to 0.5 x BA.

Chair of the Council

The Panel is not making any further recommendation on this matter from its interim report to Council 30 July 2024 (appended) . It does however wish to reiterate to the Council that it had no intention to recommend a reduction in the SRA for this position, even though the evidence suggested a reduction in the overall number of engagements post Covid. It is important that the Scheme of Allowances, and specifically the list of special responsibility allowances, clearly set out the levels of responsibility, represented by the amounts listed. The SRA is to recognise the significance of being the first citizen of the District and the preparation involved in chairing the primary policy making body of the Authority. To include an expenses budget within the published SRA does distort the perception of the level of responsibility. We felt, and still feel, that the expenses “pot” should be separated out and ring fenced for its intended use.

Audit Scrutiny Committee

The Panel has considered evidence about the developing role of the Audit Committee with regard to the accounts of the Council, and consequently the responsibility of the Chair and Vice Chair. The Panel recognises that the special responsibility allowance for the Chair should be more about recognising the nature and significance of the responsibility rather than the number of meetings. In the Panel’s view the SRA for this Chair is not sustainable and needs to increase. Also, the support role of the Vice Chair should be recognised.

Accordingly, the Panel recommends that the Chair’s allowance should be set at £6,223 (1 x BA) and the Vice Chair ‘s allowance at £2,480 (0.4 x BA – similar to other Vice Chairs), both with effect from 1 April, 2025.

RECOMMENDATION 3

With effect from 1 April 2025 the SRA for the Chair of Audit Scrutiny should increase from 0.75 x BA to 1x BA, to *recognise the nature and significance of the responsibility*.

RECOMMENDATION 4

With effect from 1 April 2025 the SRA for the Vice Chair of Audit Scrutiny (currently not receiving a SRA) should be 0.4 x BA.

Basic Allowance (BA)

RECOMMENDATION 5

The BA continues to be adjusted in line with the Local Government Employer (LGE) staff pay award for the previous year. For instances when a flat rate is awarded the increase be the average percentage increase for staff.

Dependents Allowance

The Panel considers that the process should be flexible to enable support for carers rather than needing a receipt and that there should be a presumption that claims are honest. This is seen as important to attract younger Members who may require childcare, or others may need care for elderly dependents.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Delete the sentence regarding a countersigned receipt being needed, in paragraph 7.4 of the Dependents Allowance scheme as below to allow Councillors to access care more easily.

7.4 The care of the dependant does not necessarily have to be provided by a registered or professionally qualified provider, but it cannot be claimed for care carried out by a member of the same household. In addition, it may not be claimed if the care is already paid for by another body or if claimed elsewhere. ~~A receipt is required with the cost of the care, counter-signed by both the Councillor and the carer.~~

Travel claims for SRA Postholders

The Panel believes that the approved duties in relation to claims for travel, should not be unduly restrictive on members, particularly those who hold positions of special responsibility. It is reasonable for any member to submit a claim in relation to any attendance, not limited to formal meetings, that has a relevance to their specific roles or indeed their general role as an elected councillor. Accordingly, we recommend that the reference to attendance at formal meetings be amended by the addition of words to the above effect.

Consideration was given to whether all travel associated with an SRA role (other than attending formal Committee meetings) should be covered by the SRA allowance or whether separate claims can be made.

RECOMMENDATION 7

All travel claims from Members in receipt of SRA must be reasonably associated with the role of the visit and the following be added to Appendix A – approved duties for the payment of travel and subsistence allowance.

[Section 8f Members Allowances MAY 2023.pdf](#)

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