

Report to Council

Subject: Independent Remuneration Panel - Report and recommendations for 2025/26

Date: 22 January 2025

Author: Democratic Services Manager

Purpose

To inform Council of the latest report from the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) relating to member remuneration for 2025/26 and to invite Council to consider the recommendations made by the Panel.

Recommendations

- 1) To consider the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel and whether to accept the recommendations contained in the report, or to propose an alternative; and**
- 2) Consequent on the IRP recommendations being accepted, to agree the schedule of members' allowances for 2025/26 as attached at Appendix 2 to this report; and**
- 3) To authorise the Monitoring Officer to make appropriate amendments to section 29 of the Constitution to reflect any changes to the members' allowances scheme agreed**

1. Background

- 1.1. The last IRP recommendations were debated at the Council meeting in January 2024 with members choosing not to accept some of the panel's recommendations – namely to remove the allowance for the Business Managers and Policy Advisors. At the meeting, members also agreed to link both Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances to increase in line with Chief Officer's local authority pay awards for the next four years.
- 1.2. The pay award was agreed in August 2024 and payments to members were made in August, being backdated to April 2024. For the 2024/25 year, allowances were increased by 3.6%, in line with the pay award to senior local government staff.

- 1.3. The Council will recall that, following a successful recruitment campaign, a new member was appointed to the IRP in August 2024 meaning the panel is at full capacity. The larger panel has increased the resilience and expertise of the panel, which allows for a more thorough review
- 1.4. The IRP met in December 2024 and January 2025 to carry out its annual review of members' allowances.
- 1.5. Following that meeting, the Panel prepared a report to members regarding the suggested level of members' allowances to be payable for 2025/26. As detailed in the report, the reviewed anonymised responses from members, as well as some benchmarking of allowances paid by surrounding councils of varying size and political control. Current and predicted financial information, such as inflation figures (CPI and RPI), were also reviewed to get a feel for the upcoming national financial picture.
- 1.6. After reviewing each allowance against the benchmarking data and members responses to the survey, the panel agreed upon the below recommendations:
 - That all Basic Allowances only, payable from 1 April 2025, should be increased in line with the senior officer pay award offer; and
 - Add a bicycle rate to the travel expenses section of 20p per mile; and
 - That the allowance for Business Managers be removed from the scheme; and
 - No other changes are made for the 2025/26 year.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The Panel's report, including associated recommendations, is attached at Appendix 1. Recommendations are noted above at 1.6.
- 2.2 Should Council be minded to accept the Panel's recommendations, then the level of allowances to be paid to members for 2025/26, subject to any pay award, will be as set out at Appendix 2.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel is advisory in nature so Council could decide on an alternative scheme of allowances payable to members.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Should Council accept the Panel's recommendations, then costs will be included in proposed budgets for 2025/26. Not all costs are known, due to

the ad hoc nature of some of the suggested allowances, but the removal of the allowances for the Business Manager would help to alleviate any budgetary pressures given the already agreed increases to all members basic and special responsibility allowances.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) set out that local authorities must establish a panel to review and advise on the level of allowances payable to members. The Council must have regard to the recommendation made by the Panel, but do not have to accept them.

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1 The scheme as a whole seeks to support members by providing financial support for carers and parents.

7. Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 The recommendation to add a bicycle rate element to the mileage scheme supports the council's carbon reduction and healthy living schemes.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel 2025/26
8.2 Appendix 2 – Proposed schedule of Members Allowances 2025/26

9. Background Papers

- 9.1 None identified

Statutory Officer approval	
Approved by: Mike Hill	Financial Officer
Date: 10.01.2025	
Approved by: Fran Whyley	Monitoring Officer
Date: 10.01.2025	