

**REPORT OF ADUR AND WORTHING COUNCILS
JOINT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL
WORTHING BOROUGH COUNCIL
March 2022**

1.0 Introduction

The Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authority (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2001 require local authorities to set up an independent panel to review Member Allowances. These regulations specifically abolished the payment of Attendance Allowances and also allowed for a dependent carers' allowance. These regulations have been subsequently updated by further acts and regulations.

2.0 Composition of the Panel

2.1 The current composition of the Council's Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (JIRP) is:-

Mr Barry Hillman (Chairman)
Ms Verity Lockhart
Mr Andrew Murton

3.0 Terms of Reference

3.1 The Panel's terms of reference are set out below:-

The Panel shall, unless a Council has adopted a scheme under (f) below which has been in place for less than 4 years, by 31st January 2015 and thereafter by the 30th November each year, including 2015, produce a Report making recommendations to each of the Borough, District and Parish Councils as to:

- a) the amount of the basic allowance which should be payable to its Elected and Co-opted Members;
- b) the responsibilities, roles or duties where special responsibility allowance should be payable and the amount of such allowances (District and Borough Councils only);
- c) the amount of any travelling and subsistence allowance which should be payable to its Elected and Co-opted Members
- d) whether dependants' carers' allowance should be payable and the amount of such allowance;
- e) whether payment of allowances may be backdated in cases where a scheme is amended at a time which would affect allowances payable in that year;

- f) whether adjustments to the level of allowances may be determined according to an index, and which index and for how long before its use is reviewed (subject to a maximum of 4 years);
- g) those items of expenditure that Elected and Co-opted Members may reclaim as expenses; and
- h) any other Members' allowances or reimbursement matters reasonably falling within the remit of the Panel; this may include to relevant bodies on matters of joint working and parity;
- i) such other functions as may be allocated to the Panels by Statute.

3.2 The Panel's Reports shall be submitted to the Councils by way of the Joint Governance Committee.

4.0 Background Papers

4.1 In preparing its recommendations the Panel considered the following research provided by the Council's Officers which detailed:-

- the current budget provision made for Members' Allowances;
- the current scheme of Members' Allowances paid to Members;
- the previous report of the joint independent remuneration panel;
- Members Allowances paid by other local authorities in the south east were obtained from South East Employers (SEE);
- Part Four of the Constitution of Worthing Borough Council
- Fees and charges for babysitting and caring

4.2 Group Leaders were canvassed on their views regarding levels of allowance and were invited to give their views to the Panel.

4.3 Members of the Panel are aware that the scheme is late coming forward this year. The review was slowed by a number of factors including availability of officer time, the delay in the NJC pay bargaining agreement and the proposed creation of a new committee adding uncertainty to the scheme overall.

5.0 General Principles

5.1 The Panel last undertook a review in late 2019 for the years 2020/21 and 2021/22 as a result of it's recommendations the council agreed that the basic allowance be linked to the outcome of the Officers' NJC Pay bargaining agreement for a period of two years until March 2022/2023. A Special Responsibility Allowance was also introduced for the Deputy Mayor.

5.2 The level of the NJC bargaining agreement has stayed close to the 2% budgeted for over the previous two years

5.1 The Members' Allowances scheme recognises that public service, rather than material reward, should remain the primary motivation for involvement in local

government, whilst at the same time, it should aim to attract and retain Members who are representative of the demographic makeup of the Borough.

- 5.2 The panel recognises the functions of Councillors and the hard work, long hours and at times, significant pressures involved.

6.0 Basic Allowance

- 6.3 The basic allowance on average pays less than the current minimum wage. The Panel felt that a paid similar role, given the levels of responsibility, would attract a higher than minimum wage rate. Therefore the panel was of the view that (if looking at hard figures) Councillors performing their role give a significant public discount rate for the hours that they put in. However, as stated before in the report, the Panel is minded that the members' Allowances scheme recognises that public service, rather than material reward, should remain the primary motivation for involvement in local government. The allowance should be in place so that members are 'not out of pocket' for taking up the responsibility.
- 6.4 Given comparisons regionally the level of allowance for Worthing Borough Council is slightly below average when compared with other Boroughs and Districts in the South East.
- 6.5 Given what is set out above and the fact that inflation is a pressure on personal finance, on balance the Committee felt that it was reasonable for members to expect some increase in the level of allowances.
- 6.6 The Panel noted that over the previous ten years, the basic allowance had been indexed to the Officer's NJC National Pay Bargaining agreement and believed that the principle of linking the basic allowance to raises in Officer remuneration was a fair method and should be retained.

7.0 Consideration

- 7.3 After consideration of the matters listed above the panel has put forward one costed option for the council to consider
- 7.4 The Panel was aware that the creation of a new committee was imminent and that recruitment would be undertaken for the panel in the next municipal year. Given these circumstances the panel agreed that a new review should be carried out in the next municipal year

8.0 Proposals

- 8.1 The Panel proposed the following for the Council's consideration.
- i) that the basic allowance be referenced to the outcome of the Officers' NJC Pay bargaining agreement (currently assumed as 2%) for a period of one year until March 2023;

8.2 Childcare Allowance / Carers Allowance / Travel and Subsistence Allowance

8.2.1 The panel was satisfied that the current scheme was satisfactory and therefore did not propose any changes.

8.3 Special Responsibility Allowances

8.3.1 The panel was satisfied that no changes were needed to the levels of special responsibility allowances

9.0 Recommendations

9.1 It was recommended that the Council adopts the members scheme of allowances in line with the panel's proposals and note its comments surrounding the claiming of Childcare Allowance / Carers Allowance / Travel and Subsistence Allowance.

Mr Barry Hillman (Chairman)

Ms Verity Lockhart

Mr Andrew Murton