

TO: COUNCIL  
30 APRIL 2014

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**MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME  
REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL  
Director of Corporate Services – Democratic & Registration Services**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require councils to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) which will broadly have the functions of providing the local authority with advice on its scheme and the amounts to be paid. Local authorities must have regard to this advice.
- 1.2 The Independent Remuneration Panel appointed by the Council met in December 2013 at the Council's invitation. The Panel's report and recommendations are appended to this report at Annex B. The Council is asked to consider the Panel's recommendations and to decide whether to make any changes to the current Scheme.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **That Members consider their response to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as set out in bold in the Panel's report and summarised in the Executive Summary.**
- 2.2 **That any changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme take effect from 1 May 2014.**
- 2.3 **That the list of approved conferences, set out in Annex A, is approved for insertion in the Scheme.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Council must have regard to the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel in respect of the Members' Allowances Scheme. The Panel's reasons for their recommendations are set out in their report.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Not applicable.

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Statutory Guidance

- 5.1 In its deliberations the Independent Remuneration Panel has had regard to the Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in July 2003.

## Background

- 5.2 This review arose out of a number of issues raised by an audit report that required guidance and clarification, mainly in relation to Members' expenses. In addition the Panel considered the overall level of allowances; the remuneration package as a whole; issues outstanding from the previous review; and issues that had arisen since the Panel last met. The terms of reference for the review are set out in paragraph 5 of the Panel's report.
- 5.3 The Panel met twice in December 2013 to formulate their recommendations. The final report was received by the Council in February and was circulated to all Members.

## The Panel's Report and Recommendations

- 5.4 The Panel's report, including its findings and recommendations is appended to this report as Annex B. The recommendations are set out in bold in that report. The information reviewed by the Panel, listed in Appendix 2 to the Panel's report, is available from Member Services.
- 5.5 The main findings and recommendations of the Panel are that:
- (i) Members should no longer be able to claim the Broadband Allowance of £9 per month (paragraph 17);
  - (ii) the Basic Allowance remains at £8,687 and is inclusive of broadband provision, in-borough travel, in-borough parking, occasional taxis and all incidental expenses not otherwise specified in the Scheme (paragraph 18);
  - (iii) a Minority Group Deputy Leader's SRA is paid to no more than two minority groups, subject to each group reaching seven in number and should be proportionate to the SRA of a single Deputy Leader of a Minority Group (paragraph 27);
  - (iv) there should be no exceptions to the rule in respect of claims for travel to attend in-borough approved duties (paragraph 32);
  - (v) Members should not be entitled to claim for an overnight stay for an approved duty which takes place less than 50 miles from the borough unless a Member is unable to return home before midnight (paragraph 38);
  - (vi) overnight stays for attending approved duties over 50 miles from the Borough should only be claimed when a Member would have to leave home before 7am or is unable to return home before midnight (paragraph 38);
  - (vii) the maximum rates for an overnight stay are:
    - £150 for overnight stays in London and
    - £95 elsewhere and that these rates should be indexed unless subsistence and accommodation is an integral part of a training or conference package (paragraph 38);
  - (viii) claims will only be reimbursed on production of a valid receipt or proof of purchase (excluding mileage) (paragraph 42);

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- (ix) all travel and subsistence claims must be submitted within 3 months except at the end of the financial year when submission deadlines will be reduced to enable claims to be processed before the financial accounts for that year are closed (paragraph 42);
- (x) a Member may not receive allowances from more than one authority in respect of the same duties (paragraph 45);
- (xi) claims relating to approved duties at other authorities or bodies which have their own expenses schemes, should be submitted to the outside body (paragraph 45);
- (xii) exceptions to the out-of-borough travel and accommodation rules will only be permitted on verifiable health grounds (paragraph 57);
- (xiii) travel claims for approved duties outside of the borough may include the whole journey and any factors influencing cost effectiveness (paragraph 58);
- (xiv) the exception to standard class rail travel should be restricted to verifiable health grounds (paragraph 58);
- (xv) the scheme should include criteria for the use of air travel and taxis (paragraph 58); and
- (xvi) no indexation is applied to the Basic Allowance, Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) and Co-optees' Allowance until the Panel undertakes its next review; however, the indexation for the Dependents' Carers' Allowance and the Travel and Subsistence Allowances should remain in place as they relate to reimbursements of costs incurred by Members (paragraph 68).

5.6 The Panel also recommended that Members continued to be able to join the Local Government Pension Scheme if they so wish, subject to the outcome of the Government's consultation. The Government has responded to the consultation since the Panel met, with the result that newly elected Members are no longer permitted to join the pension scheme and serving Members will have to leave the scheme at the end of their term of office.

5.7 The Panel also recommended that the new Members' Allowances Scheme should be implemented from 1 April 2014 or any date before then as agreed by the Council. The April Council meeting is the first opportunity the Council has of considering the Panel's recommendations since the Panel's report was received therefore it is recommended that the new Scheme should be implemented from 1 May 2014.

### Approved Conferences

5.8 The list of approved conferences which Members are able to attend has been reviewed and updated where the name of the conference has changed. Members are asked to confirm the current list for inclusion in the Scheme as set out in Annex A.

Publicity Arrangements

- 5.9 In accordance with the Regulations, copies of the Panel's report are available at the Council's offices and via the Council's website. In addition a notice has been published in a local newspaper stating that the Council has received recommendations from an Independent Remuneration Panel about its scheme of allowances and describing the main features of the Panel's recommendations. Another notice will be published after the Council has considered the Panel's recommendations, setting out the changes to the Scheme.

**6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 Nothing to add to the report.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 If the Council accepts the Panel's recommendations there will be a saving of £1,620 on the broadband allowance. This is a relatively small saving due to the low number of Members who claim the allowance.
- 6.3 Any other financial implications are expected to be insignificant and will be identified through the budget monitoring process and reported through the Quarterly Service Reports in 2014/15.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.6 One of the purposes of reviewing the Members' Allowances Scheme is to ensure that financial considerations are not a barrier to any person entering public office or assuming a particular role on the Council. By the same token the levels of allowances should be such that financial gain is not seen as an incentive for taking up public office.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.7 There are no strategic risk management issues relevant to this report.

Other Officers

- 6.8 None

**7 CONSULTATION**

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Not applicable

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Not applicable

Representations Received

- 7.3 Not applicable

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Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

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**SCHEDULE 4**  
**APPROVED CONFERENCES**

<u>Conference</u>	<u>Delegate</u>
Centre for Public Scrutiny Annual Conference	Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission
Chartered Institute of Housing South East Region Conference	Relevant Executive Member
CIPFA Annual Conference	Leader or relevant Executive Member
Institute of Licensing Conference	Licensing & Safety Committee Chairman
Trading Standards Institute Conference	Relevant Executive Member
LGA Annual Conference	Leader, Leader of the Opposition and one other majority group Member
LGA / ADASS – the National Children’s and Adult Services Conference	Executive Members for Adult and Children’s Services and Chairmen of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing and Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panels
LGA Annual Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference	Relevant Executive Member
LGA Group Improvement and Innovation Conference and Exhibition	Relevant Executive Member
Regional Health & Safety Partnership Conference	Relevant Executive Member
SOCITM annual IT conference	Relevant Executive Member