



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	ANNUAL COUNCIL – 24 MAY 2023
Subject	REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL.
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member(s)	Cllr Joe Harris - Leader of the Council Email: joe.harris@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer(s)	Angela Claridge, Director of Governance & Development Tel: 01282 623219 Email: angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To outline the findings and recommendations of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel regarding Member's Allowances
Annexes	Annex A – Annual Report and Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel 2023. Annex B – Draft Allowances Scheme 2023-27
Recommendation/s	The Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Annex A), and thank them for their input;2. Agree to index link members' allowances with the pay settlement agreed by the National Employers for Local Government Services, known as "Green Book".3. Adopt the Draft Allowances Scheme 2023-27 (Annex B), or an amended version of it.4. Extend the benefits of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to all Members with immediate effect.5. Implement maternity, paternity and adoption policies for Cabinet Members with immediate effect.6. Support a mid-term review in 2024.
Corporate priorities	Ensure that all services delivered by the Council are delivered to the highest standard
Key Decision	No

Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>The Independent Remuneration Panel consulted with a representative group of eight Councillors and distributed a Members Questionnaire, completed by fourteen members.</p> <p>South West IRP Chairs Network Chief Technology Officer Deputy Chief Executive/SI51 Officer.</p>

I. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 By law, the Council is required to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), which recommends the level of allowances for Councillors. The Panel is made up of three persons who are suitably skilled members of the public and are independent of the District Council. Members of the Panel have proven knowledge and experience of being appointed to an IRP, and making representations to Councils as appropriate. The Panel's report is attached at Annex A for consideration by the Council.
- 1.2 The Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 03 require local authorities to review their Allowances Schemes and to appoint Independent Remuneration Panels to consider and make recommendations on new schemes. The Government's "Guidance on Consolidated Regulations on Local Authority Allowances" outlines the main statutory provisions and gives non-statutory guidance.
- 1.2 The Panel recommends the basic allowance (paid to all councillors), special responsibility allowances (SRA), and other allowances (e.g. for travel, subsistence, dependent carers, and co-optees' allowances). The Panel's recommendations are included in the Panel's report which is attached at Annex A.
- 1.3 Full Council, at its meeting on 14th May, 2019, accepted the recommendations of the IRP at that time to increase the basic allowance to £5,000 per annum with future allowance amounts to be indexed against staff pay awards over the four year term ie until May 2023. The staff pay award is typically effective from April every year. Staff pay awards from April 2020 through to April 2022 have been applied (April 2023 remains under negotiation), and this has taken the basic allowance to £5,541.96 per annum.

2. DRAFT ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2023-27: KEY MESSAGES

- 2.1 The IRP's report at annex A provides their more detail. However, there are some key messages set out in paragraphs 2.2 – 2.6 below.
- 2.2 The IRP took a statistical approach in comparing the allowances to the average for district councils in the South West of England region. The IRP concluded that the level of both the basic allowance and special responsibility allowances paid to cabinet members and some other roles that hold significant responsibilities, were on a par with the average for other district councils in the region.
- 2.3 The IRP considered the need to make the role of councillor inclusive to people with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. The IRP identified that one way in which an allowances scheme could make a useful intervention, would be by including provision for family friendly policies such as maternity, paternity or adoption leave for members

with special responsibility allowances.

- 2.4 The IRP also considered whether members should continue to be paid a separate allowance for ICT costs which enable members to utilise or purchase a device of their choice, or be provided with a Council issued device. Members when interviewed tended to express a preference for using the device they're already familiar with and don't want multiple devices. Members are able to use their personal device to connect to either Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace. This allows them to access the Councils Email/Calendar & file infrastructure as well as systems like Modern Gov, but don't have direct access to the Councils internal systems such as finance or human resources. The IRP explored whether using personal devices could open the Council up to any form of increased security or data protection risk. The Chief Technology Officer has confirmed that members personal devices are managed using a combination of software (Google MDM, Microsoft Intune) and Application Protection Policies. In addition, the Cyber Security team are able to monitor the access and if necessary, block access. He has also confirmed that use of personal devices is not seen as significantly increasing cyber security risk. The flexibility this allows Councillors to perform their duties is worth the minimal increase in risk. Therefore no change is recommended.
- 2.5 In light of the unfortunately too prevalent abuse of councillors nationally, and the Council's commitment to support Councillors through Cotswold District Council's endorsement of the Local Government Association "Debate not Hate" initiative, the panel explored ways the Members Allowance Scheme could assist. As a result the Panel would like to extend to all members the Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) currently offered to staff. EAP are intended to help individuals deal with personal problems that might adversely impact their work performance, health and wellbeing. EAP generally include assessment and short-term telephone counselling. The total cost for 34 members is £600 per annum.
- 2.6 Based on the interviews held with various councillors it is obvious that members work in different ways, but during the period May 2019 to date, most have experienced an increase in the time spent on council duties during the Covid-19 pandemic and other recent national and world events such as the "Cost of Living" crisis and war in Ukraine. However the IRP were unclear if that has resulted in a permanent increase to the time spent on council duties. As a result the panel would like to reconvene in two years or from their initial assessment ie 2024/5 to specifically review workloads.
- 2.7 The IRP met on a number of occasions during 2022 and officers have produced a draft allowances scheme based on the Panel's recommendations. The Draft Members' Allowances Scheme is attached at Annex B. Council is recommended to adopt the Draft Scheme subject to any amendments that are considered and passed at the Council meeting.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 The Council is required to have regard to the recommendations of the IRP but it is open to any member of Council to propose amendments to the Draft Scheme which is attached at Annex B.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Any increased in costs for 2023/24 will be an in-year budget challenge and will have to be funded from savings elsewhere in the budget. Any growth will be included in budget proposals for 2024/25. The IRP has proposed that allowances are indexed to staff pay for a four year period which will provide clarity for future budget setting processes.

4.2 For ease of administration, the Members allowances shown in annex B have been rounded to the nearest £ and are equally divisible by 12 for payment on a monthly basis.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council is required by regulations to make a scheme for the allowances to be paid to members. A scheme must include provisions for paying a basic allowance, special responsibility allowances, dependants' carers' allowance, travelling and subsistence allowance and co-optees' allowance. Schemes. A scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index but may not rely on an index for a period of more than four years.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1 The intention of the regulations in requiring the establishment of an IRP on members' allowances by each local authority, included the desire to extend the opportunity to become a councillor to as wide an audience as possible, through the development of local remuneration schemes. This is in line with one of the three aims of the Public Sector Duty of the Equality Act 2010 – to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The IRP has consistently held this intention as one of the principles under which it has made its recommendations.

7.2 The IRP have recommended an amendment to the scheme aimed at promoting equalities which is the adoption of a maternity, paternity and adoption leave scheme for councillors in receipt of special responsibility allowances.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel noted that the Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency. With this in mind the Panel has recommended that the Council seeks to encourage “paper-light” meetings

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Review of Members Allowances 2019/20 – Council 14th May 2019.

Summary of Members Allowances (available on the Cotswold.gov.uk website).

Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003

Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2003