

## **SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES – REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (IRP)**

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 That the Cabinet considers the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and makes recommendations to the Council for the Scheme of Members' Allowances to apply from 1 April 2022.

### **2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 On 21 February 2022, the Council commissioned an IRP comprising Mark Palmer, Julia Abbott, Martin James and Roger Farrall, to review and make recommendations on the Council's Scheme of Members' Allowances for the four year period commencing 1 April 2022. The IRP met over two days on 29 and 30 March 2022. The IRP's report arising from its deliberations is attached at Appendix 1.

- 2.2 The IRP terms of reference were as follows:-

1. To review New Forest District Council's Members' Allowances Scheme when requested by the Cabinet, but at least every four years, and to make recommendations to the Cabinet for any changes to the Scheme that the Panel considers appropriate, within existing budgets.
2. To make recommendations for the level of any further allowances that might be referred to the Panel by the Cabinet from time to time.
3. As and when requested by the Cabinet, to sit as the Independent Remuneration Panel for Parish and Town Councils in the District, and to make appropriate recommendations to Parish and Town Councils on the level of allowances to apply to their Councillors, within existing budgets.

- 2.3 The IRP conducted a series of interviews with a selection of Members and also commissioned a survey of all Members.

### **3. LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Local Government (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 makes it mandatory for local authorities to receive a report from an Independent Remuneration Panel before making or amending their schemes of members' allowances. Where a scheme allows for the adjustment of allowances to be determined by reference to an index, the application of that index must be reviewed at least every four years. A four-year period has elapsed since the index applicable to this Council's scheme of allowances was last reviewed and fresh recommendations from the Panel on the scheme to apply from 1 April 2022 were therefore required.

- 3.2 The current scheme is available to view at <https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/documents/s20823/Chapter%2029.pdf>

- 3.3 The Council is not obliged to adopt the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel but it must “have regard to” them.
- 3.4 The Regulations also require the Council to publish the main features of the Panel's recommendations and to make copies of the report available for inspection. Arrangements for this are in hand.

#### **4. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (IRP) RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The Panel's recommendations are set out in the full report at Appendix 1 and are not repeated in this report. For ease of reference, a draft Scheme of Members' Allowances is set out at Appendix 2, should the Council adopt the recommendations of the IRP in full.
- 4.2 The Cabinet is requested to consider the Panel's recommendations and to make recommendations to the Council. It has been this Council's practice in the past to accept the recommendations of the Panel in their entirety.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 By implementing the recommendations of the IRP in full, there will be a total increase of £14,205 to Members' Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances paid annually.
- 5.2 The Chairman of HR Committee special responsibility allowance is not payable to the Leader of the Council who is already in receipt of the Leader's special responsibility allowance, nor is a Minority Group Leader allowance payable under the current political balance of the Council. Therefore, taking into account the total allowances that may be payable under the new scheme, there is a further potential impact of up to a maximum of £2,679 per annum.
- 5.3 There will be a small impact of the proposed changes to the dependent carers and child care allowances, but the number of claims in any one year are minimal.
- 5.4 It should be noted that from May 2023 as the Council implements the Electoral Review of the District, the reduction of councillors from 60 to 48 will result in an annual saving of £82,452, based on a reduction of 12 annual basic allowance payments. In practice, further savings will be achieved in a pro-rata reduction of travel and subsistence allowances claimed by a smaller number of councillors.

#### **6. EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The IRP recommendations include a parental leave policy, which if implemented, is likely to remove barriers to becoming a councillor, including encouraging younger prospective councillors with family commitments to stand for election. Furthermore, based on patterns of caring responsibilities, the policy is likely to remove specific barriers for women to fulfil their role as a councillor, based on the findings of the Fawcett Society report (Does Local Government Work for Women, 2018), which cited that a 'lack of maternity, paternity provision or support' is a real barrier for women aged 18-44 to fulfil their role as a councillor.
- 6.2 The report also recommends a dependent carers allowance which should ensure that potential candidates are not deterred from standing for election, taking into account a range of personal circumstances.

## **7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The IRP recommends the addition of a travel allowance for electric vehicles on the current HM Revenue and Customs rate of 45p a mile. This, alongside the existing allowance provision for bicycles and public transport, promotes the use of sustainable travel for Council business.

## **8. CRIME AND DISORDER AND DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report.

### **Further information:**

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#### **Background Papers:**

[Cabinet Report – 16 February 2022](#)

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