

Report to: Meeting of the Full Council – 17 October 2023

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Report Summary	
Report Title	Report of the Members Allowances Independent Remuneration Panel
Purpose of Report	To consider the final report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel regarding the Scheme of Members Allowances for 2023/4 given the recent changes in governance.
Recommendations	That the Council: (a) considers the final report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel; and (b) approves the report recommendations as changes to the current Scheme of Members Allowances.
Reason for Recommendation	To consider the final report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel following the changes in governance with an increase in the number of Portfolio Holders.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 As Members will be aware, the Full Council, at their meeting held on 18 July 2023, agreed to reconvene the Independent Remuneration Panel on Members Allowances, following an increase in the number of Cabinet Portfolio Holders from five to eight.
- 1.2 The Panel had previously conducted a review of allowances based on the Council's revised governance arrangements which were implemented as from 17 May 2022. The current Scheme of Members Allowances was also adopted from that date.
- 1.3 Regulations set out the range of allowances that can be paid to Councillors and the requirement to have an Independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations to the Council regarding Members' Allowances.
- 1.4 The scope of the review was to consider the change in the Council's Cabinet arrangements and any wider implications. To ensure the Scheme remains fit for purpose, the Panel was also asked to consider the special responsibility allowance

made to the Leader of the Main Opposition Group, to review the current childcare and dependents carers' allowance, and to consider the wording of the Members Allowance Scheme covering allowances made to Leaders of Minority Opposition Groups.

- 1.5 The Independent Remuneration Panel have now completed their Report and this is attached as the **Appendix** to the report.

2.0 Audit & Governance Committee

- 2.1 This Final Report of the Panel was considered by the Audit & Governance Committee at their meeting held on 27 September 2023.
- 2.2 Comments made at the Committee included the suggestion that there should be an increase in the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Chair / Vice-Chair of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee and the Leader of the Main Opposition Group due to the anticipated increases in workload.
- 2.3 In addition, there was some concern with the proposed wording for Point 1 of the Scheme – “There is no limit as to the number of special responsibility allowances paid to individual Members, except Opposition Group Leader payments will not be made if the relevant Member is a Cabinet Member with portfolio, Leader or Deputy Leader” which it was felt was not clear.
- 2.4 There was also a concern raised at the Audit & Governance Committee that Members were not aware of the full scope of the review and had not fed in specific comments on issues such as opposition group leaders and childcare allowances.
- 2.5 These points were made to the Panel and the Chair responded with additional comments that the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee were closely linked to those of the Cabinet and it was considered difficult to justify the Chair's Special Responsibility Allowance exceeding that of a Cabinet Portfolio Holder, which was the principle laid down at the time when the new governance arrangements were introduced. The Panel also considered that it was too early to determine how the workloads would impact on the Council's wider governance so monitoring and evaluation would be required prior to any increase in such Special Responsibility Allowances and it was considered that any increases would still need to be linked to allowances payable to Cabinet Portfolio Holders.
- 2.6 The Panel also came back further in respect of the wording for Point 1 of the Scheme advising that this was simplified as far as possible, but would support a different form of words if appropriate. They did add that one option was to stipulate that Members were only entitled to one Special Responsibility Allowance but this would be a fundamental change to the current scheme.

- 2.7 In terms of the scope of the review, the Panel focused on the wider impact on the change in governance given the increased numbers of portfolios. However, they gathered sufficient information from comparator data and the Member sessions in producing their full report and recommendations.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations officers have considered the following implications; Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications - FIN23-24/42

- 3.1 The increase from five portfolio holders to eight and the proposal to continue with the current SRA rate of £8,500 will require an in year additional budget requirement of £25,500. However, the three new portfolio holders started their roles in July 2023, therefore the additional budget required for the financial year 2023-24 will be £19,125. The £19,125 will be financed from the Corporate Contingency and the future year budget implications will be built into the budget setting process for the financial year 2024-25 onwards.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Report to Full Council – 9 March 2021

<https://democracy.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=448>

Report to Full Council – 17 May 2023

<https://democracy.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=756>

Report to Full Council 18 July 2023

<https://democracy.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=891>

Current Scheme of Members Allowances

<https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/your-council/your-council/councillors-andcommittees/councillor-allowances/>