

NEWARK & SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES FOR 2023/24
SEPTEMBER 2023

1. Introduction

The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) has a responsibility to make recommendations to Newark and Sherwood District Council (the Council) on the levels of allowances to be paid to Members of the Council. This report has been prepared in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

The Panel members are:

Sarah Britton	-	Newark and Sherwood
Paul Cox	-	Rushcliffe
John Shaw (Chairman)	-	North Kesteven

2. Purpose of the Review

To review the implications following the increase in the number of portfolio holders from five to eight. To consider any wider implications on Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) made to other committees, as a consequence of the change. To consider the SRA made to the Leader of the Main Opposition Group. To review the current childcare and dependents carers' allowance. To consider the wording of the Members Allowance Scheme covering allowances made to Leaders of Minority Opposition Groups.

3. Review Process

The contents of Report to the Annual Meeting of the Full Council - 23 May 2023 entitled Political Composition of the Council and allocation of seats on Committees to Political Groups and the Report to the Meeting of the Full Council 18 July 2023 entitled Leader's Appointments, have been considered and used as a starting point for this review, together with the last Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel Recommendations for the Scheme of Members Allowances for 2022/23 dated March 2022.

The review has looked at the Council's rates of remuneration in comparison with, other Nottinghamshire District Councils and neighbouring District Councils operating on a cabinet system.

The IRP received help and advice from both Officers and Members and we are grateful for their assistance. A list of all those involved is shown in Appendix One.

We understand that our recommendations will be considered by the Audit and Governance Committee ahead of the report being presented to the Full Council on 17 October 2023, for a decision with regard to the recommendations made.

4. **Findings**

4.1 Cabinet Members - Portfolios Holders

The increase from five portfolio cabinet members including the Leader and Deputy Leader to eight has been considered. The original cabinet was one of the smaller sized cabinets compared to the others identified where eight is now the most typical size. The SRAs paid to the Leader and Deputy Leader include their roles as Cabinet Members. The current rate of £8,500 is within the top half of the sample used but is not considered excessive in comparison to others. The IRP accept that there has only been a relatively short period for the new arrangements to operate and on which to make a judgement. However, it is believed that the functions in the new cabinet portfolios exceed those of the previous cabinet in both range and depth.

It is recommended that the existing SRA of £8,500 is paid to all Cabinet Members with portfolio (excluding the Leader and Deputy Leader).

4.2 Other SRAs

Whilst it is acknowledged that the change in cabinet size will have some impact on the workload for the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee, it is not considered necessary to amend the SRAs. The changes to the Cabinet have not impacted significantly onto any of the other Committees to warrant any changes to the allowances paid to the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of any of the Committees.

It is recommended that the current allowances paid to the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of any of the Committees remain the same.

4.3 Leader of the Main Opposition Group

The changes to the Cabinet's size have slightly altered the role of the Leader of the Main Opposition Group who acts as the ninth voting member without portfolio. The current allowance paid £6,400, is the largest amount paid to this role within the sample Authorities reviewed.

It is recommended that the SRA paid to the Leader of Main Opposition Group remains unchanged.

4.4 Members Allowance Scheme – Point 1

To avoid any potential confusion as to which allowances the Leader of a Minority Opposition Group is entitled, the following addition (shown in italics) could be made to Point 1 of the Members Allowance 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.”*

It is recommended that Point 1 of the Members Allowance Scheme is amended to: 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.

4.5 Members Allowance Scheme – Point 2

Following on from point 4.4 above, the following addition (shown in italics) could be made to Point 2 of the Members Allowance Scheme. “For the purposes of qualifying for a *Main Opposition Group Leader or Minority Opposition Group* special responsibility allowance a political group on the Council needs to comprise of at least four Members. *The Main Opposition Group is the largest Group for which no Member is a Cabinet Member with Portfolio, Leader or Deputy Leader. A Minority Opposition Group is any other Group.*”

It is recommended that Point 2 of the Members Allowance Scheme is amended to: For the purposes of qualifying for a Main Opposition Group Leader or Minority Opposition Group special responsibility allowance a political group on the Council needs to comprise of at least four Members. The Main Opposition Group is the largest Group for which no Member is a Cabinet Member with Portfolio, Leader or Deputy Leader. A Minority Opposition Group is any other Group.

4.6 Childcare and Dependents Carers’ Allowance

A review of the rates paid by other Nottinghamshire District Councils showed that a number have adopted the National Living Wage, currently £10.42 per hour as the maximum rate paid. This is a minor increase on the current maximum rate of £10 per hour for costs actually incurred, or more in exceptional circumstances. The Panel feels linking the rate to the National Living Wage will help future-proof it and negate the need for regular reviews.

It is recommended that the current rates payable for Childcare and Dependents Carers’ allowances are increased to a maximum level of the National Living Wage.

5. Summary of Main Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 5.1 The existing SRA of £8,500 is paid to all Cabinet Members with portfolio (excluding the Leader and Deputy Leader).
- 5.2 The current allowances paid to the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of any of the Committees remain the same.
- 5.3 The SRA paid to the Leader of the Main Opposition Group remains unchanged.
- 5.4 Point 1 of the Members Allowance Scheme is amended to: 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.

- 5.5 Point 2 of the Members Allowance Scheme is amended to: For the purposes of qualifying for a Main Opposition Group Leader or Minority Opposition Group special responsibility allowance a political group on the Council needs to comprise of at least four Members. The Main Opposition Group is the largest Group for which no Member is a Cabinet Member with Portfolio, Leader or Deputy Leader. A Minority Opposition Group is any other Group.
- 5.6 The current rates payable for Childcare and Dependents Carers' allowances are increased to a maximum level of the National Living Wage.

Appendix One

Members:

Cllr Rowan Cozens	-	Deputy Leader of the Council
Cllr Susan Crosby	-	Portfolio Holder – Health, Wellbeing & Leisure
Cllr Simon Ford	-	Vice-Chairman of Audit & Governance Committee
Cllr Andy Freeman	-	Chairman of Planning Committee
Cllr Peter Harris	-	Chairman of Audit & Governance Committee
Cllr Simon Haynes	-	Committee Member
Cllr Rhona Holloway	-	Leader of the Main Opposition Group
Cllr Roger Jackson	-	Committee Member
Cllr Jack Kellas	-	Committee Member
Cllr John Lee	-	Committee Member
Cllr Keith Melton	-	Portfolio Holder – Climate Change
Cllr Dave Moore	-	Committee Member
Cllr Emma Oldham	-	Portfolio Holder – Biodiversity & Environmental Services
Cllr Paul Peacock	-	Leader of the Council
Cllr Mike Pringle	-	Chairman of Policy & Performance Improvement Committee
Cllr Neil Ross	-	Vice-Chairman of Policy & Performance Improvement Committee
Cllr Maurice Shakeshaft	-	Committee Member
Cllr Paul Taylor	-	Portfolio Holder – Public Protection & Community Relations
Cllr Tina Thompson	-	Committee Member

Officers:

John Robinson	-	Chief Executive
Sanjiv Kohli	-	Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer
Sue Bearman	-	Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Nigel Hill	-	Business Manager Elections and Democratic Services