

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council

6 December 2023

TITLE:	Review of the Members' Allowances Scheme
EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR:	Councillor Mike Gledhill – Leader of the Council
CONTACT OFFICER:	Linden Vernon – Head of Democratic Services
WARDS INVOLVED:	Wards

Appendix A attached – Independent Remuneration Panel Report

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 To report on the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel to advise the Council on its Members' Allowances scheme.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the findings of the Independent Review of Members Allowances, as set out in Appendix A to this report, be noted.
- 2.2 That a revised Scheme of Members' allowances be approved in accordance with the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 All councils are required to convene an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and seek its advice before they make any changes or amendments to their members' allowances scheme. Local authorities must 'pay regard' to their IRP's recommendations before setting a new or amended Members' Allowances Scheme.
- 3.2 The Terms of Reference of the IRP were to make recommendations to the Council on:-
- The amount of basic allowance that should be payable to its elected members and the expenses that it is deemed to include.

- The responsibilities or duties which should lead to the payment of a special responsibility allowance and as to the amount of such an allowance.
 - The duties for which a travelling and subsistence allowance can be paid and as to the amount of this allowance.
 - The amount of any Co-optees' Allowances payable.
 - Whether the authority's allowances scheme should include an allowance in respect of the expenses of arranging for the care of children and dependants and if it does make such a recommendation, the amount of this allowance and the means by which it is determined.
 - Whether annual adjustments of allowance levels may be made by reference to an index, and, if so, for how long such a measure should run.
 - Any other issues brought to the attention of the IRP.
- 3.3 The review included the consideration of a range of evidence including questionnaires completed by serving councillors, a number of factual briefings held between a range of members and the Chair of the IRP and key benchmarking data including a summary of allowances paid in other similar councils.

4. **How this report links to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 This report supports the objective of "Strong and effective democratic processes" contained within Aim 2 of the Council's Corporate Plan by seeking to ensure that persons who elect to stand for office as a local councillor are not financially disadvantaged from doing so, by providing them with appropriate levels of allowances to carry out the various roles available.

5. **Alternative Options**

- 5.1 The Council may accept, reject or modify the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

6. **Implications**

- 6.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)
No direct implications
- 6.2 Workforce
No direct implications.
- 6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment
The review of allowances will help to ensure that people from a range of backgrounds feel able to take part in local democracy.

6.4 Financial Considerations

It is anticipated that the changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme proposed can be accommodated from either existing budgetary provision in the event of an in year underspend or from contingency reserves in the event of an overspend position. Provision will be made across the following years for the approved proposals as part of the annual budget cycle.

6.5 Legal

The review has been organised in accordance with the The Local Authorities' (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

6.6 Climate Change

The revised scheme introduces a provision for the use of hybrid cars by members and a passenger supplement rate to encourage car sharing.

6.7 Consultation

All councillors were invited to submit written submissions as part of the review and a number of meetings took place between a range of councillors with the Chair of the IRP.

6.8 Risk Assessment

The majority of representations received from councillors indicated that the current level of the allowances undervalued the work of members. The Basic Allowance in particular was seen as so low as to be a barrier to serving on Council.

Mark Trillo

Executive Director (Governance and Commissioning) and Monitoring Officer

**Web Links and
Background Papers**

Independent Remuneration Panel Report – Attached
Appendix A

Contact details

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