

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Full Council – 5 October 2021

Report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel on the Member's Allowances Scheme

This matter is the responsibility of the Leader of the Council – Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts

Report Author: Amy Tregellas, Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer

1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report has been produced by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (JIRP) and is a 'light touch' review of the Somerset West and Taunton Members Allowances Scheme.

2 Recommendations

That the Council endorses the recommendations of the JIRP (in section 6.4 of Appendix A), which are:

2.1 The Basic Allowance (BA) for all Councillors remains at the current comparative level

2.2 All existing Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) remain in place at current multiples

2.3 The previous SRA for the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee is extended to both Chairs of the two new committees that replaced it (Corporate Scrutiny Committee and Community Scrutiny Committee).

2.4 The previous SRA for the Chair of Audit, Governance and Standards Committee is extended to both Chairs of the two new committees that replaced it (Audit & Governance Committee and Standards Committee)

2.5 No permanent SRA is made available to the Deputy Leader but the current temporary additional provision is retained and kept at the mid-point between the Leader SRA and the cabinet member SRA on a pro rata basis.

2.6 No SRA is made available to the four vice chairs of Corporate Scrutiny Committee, Community Scrutiny Committee, Licensing Committee and Audit & Governance Committee.

2.7 A new SRA is made available to the Vice Chair of the Planning Committee set at 0.46 x BA

- 2.8 The BA (& by application of multipliers, all SRA) is inflated for 2021/22 & 2022/23 by Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers Housing costs (CPIH)
- 2.9 Whilst the Panel feel there is an argument for looking at travel and subsistence rates in the SW&T Scheme of Allowances for Members in any fundamental review that may be triggered, for this 2021/22 & 2022/23 travel allowances to be adjusted in accordance with rates set by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) from time to time and subsistence allowances to remain linked to increases (or decreases) in staff subsistence rate

3 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 The risk of the Council not finalising these appointments, could lead to the reputational damage to the Council and the dissolution of important links.

4 Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 Legal provisions in relation to members' allowances are set out in the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021) and subsequent amendments to the regulations (SI 2003/1022 and SI 2003/1692) ['the Regulations'].
- 4.2 Under the Regulations each Council has to appoint an Independent Panel to make recommendations on its Scheme of Members' Allowances. The Council must have due regard to the recommendations of the Panel before it makes any decisions in relation to its Members' Allowances Scheme but it may accept, reject, or amend any of the Panel's recommendations. The Regulations provide for a single panel to advise more than one Council.
- 4.3 SWT is a member of a JIRP alongside Mendip District Council and Somerset County Council (SCC). The Panel's membership comprises three independent representatives appointed by SCC and one each by the District Councils. All of the members of the Panel are residents of Somerset.
- 4.4 The Panel's report is attached as Appendix A to this report

5 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities

- 5.1 The formulation and review of a Members' Allowances Scheme for the Council is a statutory requirement.

6 Finance / Resource Implications

- 6.1 The CPIH inflationary increase to Member's Allowances is factored into the budget during the budget setting process each year based on the figure for September.
- 6.2 The additional cost for 2021/22 of having an additional SRAs for the additional Scrutiny Committee Chair, Standards Committee Chair and new allowance for the Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee is £9,312.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021) and subsequent amendments to the regulations (SI 2003/1022 and SI 2003/1692) set out the requirements relating to the Member's Allowance Scheme.

8 Climate and Sustainability Implications

8.1 N/A

9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

9.1 N/A

10 Equality and Diversity Implications

10.1 N/A

11 Social Value Implications

11.1 N/A

12 Partnership Implications

12.1 N/A

13 Health and Wellbeing Implications

13.1 N/A

14 Asset Management Implications

14.1 N/A

15 Data Protection Implications

15.1 N/A

16 Consultation Implications

16.1 N/A

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No**
- **Cabinet/Executive – No**
- **Full Council – Yes**

Reporting Frequency: Annually

List of Appendices

Appendix A	JIRP Report
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