

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Full Council meeting 4 May 2021

Agenda item 11: Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Members' Allowances

To be proposed by Councillor Samuel

2 RECOMMENDATION

Council is asked to

- 2.1 Note the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) on Members' Allowances and implement the recommendations as follows:

Recommendation 1:

Accept the IRP recommendations. However, the start of incremental increases in Basic Allowances is to be delayed until 2022/23, in recognition of the of the impact of Covid-19 on local residents.

Recommendation 2:

Accept the IRP recommendations with the exception of 2ii.

Remove the present reduction of 50% for receipt of a second SRA to ensure this is paid in full, so that it properly reflects the work undertaken and, in particular, the additional work for performance management addressed in the Council's response to the Advisory Comments.

Recommendations 3-11:

Accept the IRP recommendations.

Recommendation 12:

Reject the IRP recommendations as noted at recommendation 20.

Reject the proposed change to the Group Leaders allowance in so far as this relates to the Leader of Council but accept the governance element for all minority group leaders and continue to pay the allowance at the rate of £428 per member for all Group leaders for each member of their Group.

Recommendations 13-19:

Accept the IRP recommendations.

Recommendation 20:

20 i. Multiple Special Responsibility Allowances & Group Leaders allowances

Rationale and comments in support of recommendations 2 and 12

It is understood that the impact of the current 50% reduction for a second SRA only impacts Group Leaders.

The Council acknowledges and supports the panels' concern to ensure that councillors are properly remunerated for the roles they undertake. The present impact of this rule is that the allowance for managing a political group as group leader is automatically reduced to half if this is a second SRA. The implication of the later recommendation for group leaders to performance manage members receiving an SRA will increase workload for group leaders without recognising the work involved in doing so.

Allied to this point is the compounding and therefore disproportionate impact of the proposed changes for the remuneration of Political Group Leaders.

No rationale is provided to disapply the Governance element for the Leader other than the explanation that it is assumed that the governance element is already taken account of in the Council Leaders Allowance. However, these roles are entirely different whilst the first is outward facing the second is inward facing but each require considerable time effort and commitment. The panels proposal should not be accepted. In particular, this disproportionately impacts the leader of the largest party with the greatest governance responsibility because of the increased number of members to be managed. This is especially true if the Council accepts the need for performance management of members. Perversely the present proposal does not acknowledge this increase in workload, the impact of not awarding a governance element, or the present effect of a 50% reduction through the receipt of a second SRA. The latter impact equally affects other group leaders.

The present custom and practice is for the Leader of Council to forego the Group Leaders allowance to fund the work of other members of the group for assuming responsibilities which do not attract an SRA. The current Liberal Democratic administration intend to follow the example of the 3 previous Leaders of Council in continuing this practice. Accordingly, it is proposed that even if the will of council is not to abolish the reduction for a second SRA that rule should not apply to this allowance.

20 ii. Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels

Scrutiny is an important check and balance and the role of co-ordinating the scrutiny of the Executive should be properly recognised with formal terms of reference for the role.

Proposal

The function should be formalised as part of the current scrutiny review and the IRP should be asked to evaluate the role and recommend an appropriate allowance to recognise the time effort and accountability involved in delivering this function. In addition, the delivery of effective scrutiny should not be undermined by the 50% reduction if this is a second SRA.

20 iii. Chairs Allowance

The role of the Chair of Council has been reduced and budget savings taken in respect of this. The role nevertheless has a significant ceremonial function in particular, citizenship ceremonies. It is also acknowledged that it is not possible to evaluate the impact of Covid on this role at the present time.

Proposal

The role is evaluated by the IRP and any impact should not be applied until 1 April 2022 to ensure the impacts of Covid are discounted.

20 iv. Members Performance & Development

It is important to ensure that public money is spent appropriately, and performance management is an appropriate means of achieving that outcome.

Proposal

Accept the recommendation in its entirety.

- 2.2 The Foster Panel Allowance should continue to be paid at the current rate until the banding review, detailed in para 3.14, has concluded.
- 2.3 Authorise the Monitoring Officer to action the decisions of Council on this revised scheme and respond to the IRP's queries as required.
- 2.4 Formally thank the Panel for their work.