

Report of The

**Kirklees Council
Members' Allowances
Independent Review
Panel**

30 November 2018

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1 Panel Membership

The Members of the Independent Review Panel are as follows:

Andrew Taylor (Chair)
Ian Brown
Chris West
Lynn Knowles
Stephen Thornton
Fiona Weston

The meeting of the Independent Review Panel took place on 30 November 2018.

The following officers attended the Panel meeting:

Carl Whistlecraft, Head of Democracy
Deborah Nicholson, Interim Councillor Support & Development Manager

2 Terms of Reference

The Panel's Terms of Reference are:

- (a) To advise the Council on what would be the appropriate level of remuneration for Councillors having regard to the:
 - Roles Councillors are expected to fulfil
 - Varying roles of different Councillors
 - Practice elsewhere and other Local Authorities.
- (b) To consider schemes of Members Allowances for Town and Parish Councils as and when required.
- (c) To make recommendations and provide advice to the Council on any other issues referred to the Panel by regulation or by the Council.
- (d) The Council retains its power to remove a discredited Panel Member.
- (e) The Panel can appoint its Chair from amongst its Members.

3 Constitutional Issues

(a) Term of Office

It was agreed that the current Panel membership be retained and that all relevant terms of office be renewed until December 2019.

(b) Election of Chair of Independent Review Panel

Andrew Taylor was re-elected Chair of the Independent Review Panel.

4 The Kirklees Democracy Commission - Update

The Head of Democracy provided an update to the Panel on the work and recommendations of the Kirklees Democracy Commission which have particular implications for the Panel's future deliberations.

The Panel noted that a specific piece of work was now underway to revisit the current role profile for a Kirklees Councillor. This has been commissioned by the Democracy Commission Cross Party Working Group and is being led by Councillor Cathy Scott and Councillor John Taylor.

Such work will involve engagement with staff, Councillors and citizens, the outcomes of which will form the basis of a new profile which will thereafter be considered by the Panel in the context of its wider work.

5 Councillor Annual Reports

Councillor Nigel Patrick, Group Business Manager for the Conservative Group, attended the Panel on behalf of his group to discuss the current arrangements governing the production of annual reports by Councillors.

Councillor Patrick questioned the purpose and value of producing annual reports in terms of format, content, the freedom for Councillors to express their views openly and the extent to which they were viewed as important by the public.

In noting the points made by Councillor Patrick on behalf of his wider group, the Panel made reference to the following;

- The importance of Councillors proactively seeking to demonstrate to the residents they represent their work and the impact they are having. This is in line with the Panel's previous recommendations and is also a feature of the Democracy Commission findings;
- It is ultimately a matter for the Council and the Democracy Commission Cross Party Working Group to decide whether or not Councillors should produce annual reports. The Panel is therefore of the view that current arrangements should continue until such a time as other alternatives have been explored. The Panel is keen to see the outcome of such work in the context of the wider allowances scheme;
- The need for reiterating to all Councillors that the way in which they produce their annual report is not governed by a fixed template. There is evidence Councillors have developed different styles / formats and this should be encouraged and supported;
- Arrangements have been put in place to allow Councillors to express their views openly but this means that reports are hosted on third party sites. The consequence of this is that in some instances such reports cannot be hosted on the Council's website;
- The Independent Panel thanked Councillor Patrick for his attendance.

6 Members Allowances Scheme 2019-20

The Panel considered changes to the Members allowance scheme for 2019/20.

In particular the Panel considered the following:

- (a) The Basic Allowance;
- (b) Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs);
- (c) The SRA for the Chair of Standards;
- (d) The SRA for the Group Business Manager of small groups;

The Panel considered evidence from Julie Muscroft, Service Director for Legal, Governance and Commissioning, in respect of the Chair of Standards role in the context of the wider allowances scheme. The Panel noted the following:

- The changing national and local context with regards to standards;
- The consequential implications for the role of the Chair of Standards in terms of responsibility and volume of work;
- Comparative roles in other Councils in terms of their place in the allowances scheme.

In considering the evidence the Panel acknowledged the growth in both volume and responsibility and recommended that the current role profile should be revised to reflect this, with a particular focus on the enhanced knowledge and skills that are now required. The Panel therefore recommends that the Chair of Standards is paid at Band E, subject to review in 12 months' time.

The Panel considered evidence from Councillor Andrew Cooper, Leader of the Green Group, in respect of the role of Group Business Manager of small groups. The Panel noted the following points made by Councillor Cooper:

- The comparison between the Group Business Manager of small groups and large groups in terms of responsibility and volume of work;
- The extent to which the current thresholds in terms of group numbers were reflective of such responsibilities and volumes;

In considering the evidence the Panel acknowledged that the current scheme did not reflect the role played by the Group Business Manager of small groups in the context of allowances paid. The Panel therefore recommends that Group Business Managers of small groups (3-6 members) should be paid at Band E. The Panel reiterated that where a group has two members there is an expectation that the Leader carries out the Group Business Manager role.

The Panel recommends:

- (i) The current basic allowance be increased in line with the amount awarded to Kirklees Council officers (2%) with effect from 1 April 2019.

- (ii) The increase of all special responsibility allowances (SRAs) line with the amount awarded to Kirklees Council officers (2%) with effect from 1 April 2019.
 - (a) That the SRA for the Chair of Standards be paid at Band E with effect from 1 April 2019, subject to review in 12 months;
 - (b) That the SRA Group Business Managers of small groups (3-6 members) be paid at Band E with effect from 1 April 2019;

Report produced on behalf of the Members Allowances Independent Review Panel
by Carl Whistlecraft, Head of Democracy, November 2018