

Report of The

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

6 November 2014

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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 Thursday 6 November 2014.

The following officers attended the Panel meeting:

Carl Whistlecraft, Head of Governance and Democratic Services

Deborah Nicholson, Business Support Manager

Tish Barker, Governance and Democratic Engagement Officer

## **2 Terms of Reference**

The Panel's Terms of Reference are:

- (a) To advise 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) 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**

All Members of the Panel were advised that their terms of office ended in September

or November 2014. It was agreed that the current Panel membership be retained and that all relevant terms of office be renewed. The issue would be considered again at the next meeting

**(b) Election of Chair of Independent Review Panel**

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

**4. Members Allowances Scheme 2015-16**

The Panel considered any changes to the Members allowance scheme for 2015/16. In particular the Panel considered the following:

- (a) Special Responsibility allowance paid to a Chair of a District committee
- (b) Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)
- (c) Issues relating to travel expenses within the borough

**(a) Special Responsibility Allowance paid to a Chair of a District Committee**

The panel received submissions from Councillor Light (Leader, Conservative Group), Councillor Mather (Chair, District Committee, Huddersfield) and Cllr Holroyd-Doveton (Chair, District Committee, Kirklees Rural) regarding the activities of the District Chairs since their appointment at Annual Council in June 2014 and the extent to which the allowance payable was commensurate with the actual levels of activity and responsibility being remunerated. As part of the discussion the Panel received information in respect of the following:

- The work carried out by District Committee Chairs since June 2014
- The extent to which developmental work has been cross party and the ways in which such work has been effectively communicated to all councilors.
- The difference between District Committees and the Local Area Committee model
- Current progress with regards to wider engagement, the Plan of Place and the devolution of power and budgets.

Following consideration of the information received the Panel **recommends:**

- (i) That the Allowance payable to the four District Committee Chairs continues to be paid at Band C, £7,365.
- (ii) That an interim role profile for a District Committee Chair be produced taking into consideration current activities and future expectations. This to be considered by the Panel at its next meeting
- (i) That the Special Responsibility Allowance for a District Committee Chair be reviewed at the meeting of the Independent Review Panel in November 2015.
- (vi) That there be an expectation for District Chairs to present reports in

advance of the panel meeting in November 2015 giving detailed evidence of the development of the role, progress to date and future plans.

- (v) That District Committee Chairs proactively communicate, to all councillors, progress on the development of both the strategic approach and the work of individual committees.

**(b) Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)**

The panel noted that the councillors' basic allowance and SRAs were last increased in 2009/10. Consideration was given by the panel to the issue of setting a rate for the basic allowance and SRAs for the period 2015/16.

Whilst once again wishing to acknowledge the important role played by all councillors, both in their wards and as part of special responsibilities undertaken, the Panel was mindful of the current climate within which their deliberations were taking place. The Panel recognised the need to balance the fundamental principles underpinning the scheme with an acknowledgement of the wider economic climate and its implications on local people and the public sector as a whole.

The panel noted that the Council is currently going through a period of significant change as a result of the wider financial challenges it faces. There was an acknowledgement that such changes would have implications for the roles of councillors in the future. With this in mind the panel recognised the need for a full review of the Members Allowances Scheme and in light of this the **Panel recommends:**

- (i) The maintenance of the basic allowance at the current level for 2015/16
- (i) The maintenance of all special responsibility allowances (SRAs) at their Current level for 2015/16
- (ii) That a full review of the Members Allowances Scheme takes place in 12 months' time

**(c) Consequential Changes to the Scheme**

The panel considered a submission from Cllr Light regarding travel expenses. Cllr Light highlighted that currently travel expenses for journeys made by councillors within the Kirklees area were included within the basic allowance and this was deemed by some councillors to be unequitable due to the varying distances councillors had to travel. The panel gave consideration to allowing travel expenses to be claimed for journeys within the Kirklees area and **recommends:**

- (i) That there should be no change to the existing scheme regarding travel expenses, which states that 'no additional payment will therefore be made for travel and subsistence costs for duties within the Kirklees district.'
- (ii) That the Panel wished to place on record its intention to revisit and review this issue at its next meeting in 12 months' time.

## **5. Any other Business**

The Panel was informed of the newly constituted Strategic Planning Committee and the consequential implications for the two Planning Sub Committees. The Panel **recommends:**

- (i) That the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Chairs of the Strategic Planning Committee and two Planning Sub Committees is considered at the next meeting of the Panel.