

Report of The

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

18 November 2016

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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 18 November 2016.

The following officer attended the Panel meeting:

Carl Whistlecraft, Head of Governance and Democratic Services

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

It was agreed that the current Panel membership be retained and that all relevant terms of office be renewed for a further one year term.

Andrew Taylor – November 2017
Ian Brown – March 2017
Lynn Knowles – September 2017
Stephen Thornton – November 2017
Chris West – September 2017

Fiona Weston – September 2017

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

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

4. Members Allowances Scheme 2017-18

The Panel considered any changes to the Members allowance scheme for 2017/18. In particular the Panel considered the following:

- (a) Special Responsibility allowance paid to the Group Business Manager of small groups;
- (b) Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

(a) **Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the Group Business Manager of a small group**

The panel received a submission from Councillor Cooper (Leader, Green Group) requesting that the Allowances Panel consider the case for revisiting the arrangements in place for the remuneration of Group Business Managers of small Groups. Current arrangements mean that an allowance is payable in circumstances where a Group has seven members or more.

Councillor Cooper made reference to the following points in support of his proposal;

- The comparable amount of work and levels of responsibility involved for Group Business Managers of small groups;
- The important role played by small groups in a hung council and the responsibility that follows in such circumstances.

In consideration of the information the Panel recognised that there will be a need to reconsider the approach to Special Responsibility Allowances across the wider scheme. This should include the rationale and thinking behind the respective cut off points for group-based responsibilities. Such work should not take place until such a time as the Kirklees Democracy Commission has completed its work and reported its findings. To make specific changes now would have implications for the wider architecture of the scheme. **The Panel recommends that** the arrangements currently in place for the remuneration of Group Business Managers should continue. Any changes will be considered as part of a wider review of all SRAs following the completion of the work of the Kirklees Democracy Commission.

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

The Panel noted that significant work had taken place twelve months ago to review the scheme. This included consideration of the rates payable for both the basic allowance and the suite of SRAs. In light of this the Panel was not minded to undertake any detailed reconsideration on the scheme and its component parts.

Furthermore, the Panel recognised that the Kirklees Democracy Commission is currently in the process of leading the work to redesign local democracy in Kirklees in the context of a new Council. The outcomes of this work will strongly inform the roles of councilors in the future and the consequent implications for the Allowances Scheme. In light of this **the Panel recommends:**

- (i) The current basic allowance be increased by 1% with effect from 1 April 2017;
- (ii) The maintenance of all special responsibility allowances (SRAs) at their Current level for 2017/18

5. Consequential Changes to the Scheme

The Panel considered advice in respect of the wording of Section 12 of the Scheme relating to Suspension of Allowances. **The Panel recommends that** the wording is amended to bring it into line with legislative changes.

Report produced on behalf of the Members Allowances Independent Review Panel
by:

Carl Whistlecraft, Head of Governance and Democratic Services, November 2016