

Report of The

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

21 December 2020

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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

Due to Covid 19 restrictions, the Independent Review Panel have considered the Members Allowances Scheme for 2021/22 virtually.

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 2021.

(b) Election of Chair of Independent Review Panel

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

4 Agree the rate for the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance for 2021/22.

The Panel considered changes to the Members allowance scheme for 2021/22.

In particular the Panel considered the following:

- (a) The Basic Allowance;
- (b) Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs);

The Panel recommends that:

- (i) The current basic allowance be increased in line with the amount awarded to Kirklees Council officers (% yet to be agreed) with effect from 1 April 2021.
- (ii) Special responsibility allowances (SRAs) to remain at the 2020 rate pending a root and branch review of the Members' Allowances Scheme due to take place in summer 2021. Any increase to SRAs as an outcome of the review will be backdated to 1 April 2021.
- (iii) Should the amount awarded to Kirklees Council officers not be agreed by 1 April 2021, any increase to the basic allowance will be backdated to 1 April 2021.

The reasons for this are:

1. In common with many public servants, Councillors have been faced with substantial change in their working environment as a result of Covid 19;
2. There will be a root and branch review of the Members' Allowances Scheme, including SRAs, this summer. Whilst not increasing the SRAs may introduce an element of imbalance, this will be addressed in the forthcoming review;
3. The Chancellor's recent statement on public sector pay has not yet been implemented and it seems unreasonable the panel anticipate a decision not yet taken;
4. The panel's recommendations are recommendations and are for full Council to accept, reject, or amend.

The Panel's recommendation is a majority opinion and the Panel thinks it only fair and accurate that the Panel's report reflects the minority view.

A minority held that no increase in either the Basic Allowance or the SRAs should be recommended at this time. This recommendation could be revisited in the summer review by which time the implications of Covid 19 for public sector spending would be clearer.

The Panel's recommendation is for Council to accept or reject and no doubt Council will wish to consider a broad range of factors when taking its decision on the Panel's report.

5 Consequential changes to the Scheme

There are no consequential changes to be made to the scheme.

Report produced on behalf of the Members Allowances Independent Review Panel
by Carl Whistlecraft, Head of Democracy and Place Based Working, December
2020.