

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic

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To: COUNCIL

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## Councillors' allowances scheme

### Recommendations

That Council:

1. considers the recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel;
2. authorises the head of legal and democratic to finalise a councillors' allowances scheme based on the decision in 1 and to make any consequential amendments to the constitution;
3. agrees that the revised scheme should apply from 1 April 2021;
4. agrees that any special responsibility allowance payable to the Chair of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee be backdated to 1 April 2020;
5. thanks the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel for their work in reviewing the councillors' allowance scheme.

### Purpose of Report

1. To consider the report and the recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (the panel) on a revised councillors' allowances scheme and to agree a scheme of allowances to run from 1 April 2021.

### Background

2. The Local Government Act 2000 and Local Government (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require the council to appoint an independent remuneration panel to review its councillors' allowances scheme and make recommendations on the level of allowances to be paid. Council is responsible for setting the scheme of allowances having regard to the panel's recommendations.

3. At its meeting on 7 October 2020 Council agreed to establish a joint independent remuneration panel with South Oxfordshire District Council to carry out reviews of the councillors' allowances schemes at both councils.

The decision of Council was;

- appoint a joint independent remuneration panel with Vale of White Horse District Council to carry out reviews of the councillors' allowances schemes at both councils and make recommendations on any changes to the schemes to the relevant Council;
  - make the appointment of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel effective until May 2024, one year after the 2023 district council elections;
  - to appoint South East Employers as one of the members of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel, to act as chair and provide training to new panel members;
  - authorise the head of legal and democratic to make appointments to the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.
4. Pursuant to the decision, the head of legal and democratic made appointments to the panel. Three members were appointed as panel members, including Mark Palmer, Development Director, South East Employers, who acted as chair and provided a training programme for panel members. Officers from democratic services provided administrative support.

## Panel report

5. The recommendations of the panel, which met three times during November 2020, are set out in the attached report at appendix 1. The report details the reasons and rationale for the recommendations made by the panel. The recommended allowances are summarised in the table below:

	<b>CURRENT ALLOWANCES</b> £	<b>2020/2021 RECOMMENDATIONS</b> £	<b>RATIONALE &amp; METHODOLOGY</b>
Basic Allowance	5,084	<b>£5,585</b>	2017 formula
Leader of The Council	20,334	<b>22,340</b>	4 x Basic Allowance
Deputy Leader	Was 70% of Leader- 14,234	<b>13,404</b>	60% of Leader
Cabinet Members	10,166	<b>11,170</b>	50% of Leader
Chair of Planning Committee	6,101	<b>6,702</b>	30% of Leader
Chair of Council	5,084	<b>5,585</b>	25% of Leader

Vice Chair of Planning Committee	3,050	<b>3,351</b>	50% of Chair of Planning Committee
Chair of Scrutiny Committee	3,050	<b>3,351</b>	15% of Leader
Chair of Climate Emergency Advisory Committee	New committee; <b>new SRA</b>	<b>3,351</b>	15% of Leader
Leader of Main Opposition Group	2,033	<b>2,234<sup>1</sup></b>	10% of Leader
Vice Chair of Scrutiny Committee	No allowance	<b>No allowance</b>	No change
Vice Chair of Council	1,526	<b>1,676</b>	30% of Chair of Council
Chair of General Licensing Committee	2,033	<b>1,676</b>	7.5% of Leader
Chair of Audit and Governance Committee	1,526	<b>1,676</b>	7.5% of Leader
Chair of the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee	1,526	<b>1,676</b>	7.5% of Leader

6. The panel recommends the continuation of provisions in the current allowances scheme for the payment of a travel allowance to co-opted members and independent persons, travel and subsistence for councillors and dependants' carers' allowance (paragraph 4.3 to 4.5 of the panel report). The panel recommends the introduction of parental leave to support councillors who require parental leave for maternity, paternity or adoption leave (paragraph 4.6 of the panel report).
7. Council is required to approve a councillors' allowance scheme to comply with The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The options are:-
- (i) to accept the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel

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<sup>1</sup> Payable if the Political Group has at least 15% of the total Council Members (South Oxfordshire District Council 5 group members, Vale of White Horse District Council 6 members).

- (ii) to reject all or some of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel and agree alternative allowances if in any cases it does not consider them appropriate.

## **Financial Implications**

- 8. Any increase in allowances will be met from underspends and/or contingency in the 2021/22 financial year. Officers would submit an essential growth bid for future years if required.

## **Legal Implications**

- 9. Under the Local Government (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, local authorities are required to have Independent Remuneration Panels for the purpose of reviewing their schemes of councillors' allowances. Council is required to have regard to the recommendations of the panel when making or revising a scheme of allowances. However, it does not have to accept the recommendations if it does not consider them appropriate.

## **Conclusion**

- 10. The Independent Remuneration Panel has undertaken a review of the councillors' allowances scheme. Council is requested to consider the recommendations set out in the report and agree a scheme of allowances to run from 1 April 2021 and consider whether to back date the payment of any special responsibility to the Chair of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee to 1 April 2020.