

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic

Author: Emily Barry

Telephone: 07717 272442

E-mail: emily.barry@southandvale.gov.uk

To: COUNCIL

DATE: 18 December 2024

## Councillors' allowances scheme

### Recommendations

That Council:

- a) considers the recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel;
- b) authorises the head of legal and democratic to finalise a councillors' allowances scheme based on the decision in a) and to make any consequential amendments to the constitution;
- c) agrees that the revised scheme should apply from 1 April 2025
- d) thanks the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel for their work in reviewing the councillors' allowance scheme

<b>Implications (further detail within the report)</b>	<b>Financial</b>	<b>Legal</b>	<b>Climate and Ecological</b>	<b>Equality and diversity</b>
	Yes	Yes/No	No	No
<b>Signing off officer</b>	<b>Maggie Xu</b>	<b>Vivien Williams</b>	<b>Jessie Fieth</b>	<b>Lorne Grove</b>

### 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 2025

## Strategic Objectives

2. The council is required by law to appoint an independent remuneration panel to review its councillors' allowances scheme. Council is responsible for setting the scheme of allowances and must have regard to the panel's recommendations which helps to achieve the strategic objective of running an efficient council.

## Background

3. 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.
4. At its meeting on 13 December 2023 Council agreed to appoint a joint independent remuneration panel with Vale of White Horse District Council to carry out reviews of the members' allowances schemes at both councils and make recommendations on any changes to the schemes to the relevant Council.
5. The decision of Council was:
  - appoint a joint independent remuneration panel with Vale of White Horse District Council to carry out reviews of the members' 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 2028, one year after the 2027 district council elections; and
  - authorise the head of legal and democratic to make appointments to the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.
6. Pursuant to the decision, the head of legal and democratic made appointments to the panel. Three members were appointed as panel members. Officers from democratic services provided administrative and advisory support.

## Panel report

7. The recommendations of the panel are set out in the attached report at appendix 1. The report details the reasons and the rationale for the recommendations made by the panel. The recommended allowances are summarised in the table below:

Allowance	Current Amount for 2024-25	Recommended Allowance (33% Public Service Discount)	Recommended Allowance Calculation
Basic (BA)			
<b>Total Basic:</b>	<b>£6,275</b>	<b>£8,391</b>	

<b>Special Responsibility:</b>			
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Leader of the Council	£25,101	£29,369	350% of BA
Deputy Leader	£15,060	£17,621	60% of Leader's Allowance
Cabinet Members <sup>1</sup>	£12,550	£14,685	50% of Leader's Allowance
Chair of Council	£6,275	£7,342	25% of Leader's Allowance
Vice Chair of Council	£1,883	£2,203	30% of Chair's Allowance
Chair of Planning Committee	£7,530	£8,811	30% of Leader's Allowance
Vice Chair of Planning	£3,765	£4,406	50% of Chair's Allowance
Chair of Scrutiny Committee	£3,765	£4,409	15% of Leader's Allowance
Chair of the Joint Audit & Governance Committee	£3,765	£4,409	15% of Leader's Allowance
Chair of General Licensing/Licensing Acts Committee	£1,883	£2,203	7.5% of the Leader's Allowance
Chair of the Community Grants Panel <sup>2</sup>	£1,883	£2,203	7.5% of Leader's Allowance
Leaders of Political Groups (currently paid to leader of the opposition)	£6,275	£4,409	15% of Leader's Allowance
Chair of the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee	£1,883	£2,203	7.5% of the Leader's Allowance
Chair of Climate Emergency Advisory/Climate Ecological Emergencies Committee	£3,765	£4,409	15% of the Leader's Allowance

8. 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 continuation of parental leave to support councillors who require parental leave for maternity, paternity or adoption leave (paragraph 4.6 of the panel report).
9. 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

<sup>1</sup> Excludes the Leader and Deputy Leader

<sup>2</sup> Chair of Community Grants Panel is applicable to South Oxfordshire District Council only.

- (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

10. Any increase in allowances will be the subject of an essential growth bid for the 2025/26 financial year. The 2025/26 base budget includes £222,842 for basic allowance and £172,223 for special responsibility allowances. Adoption of the IRP basic allowance recommendations will cost £318,858 – an increase of £96,016. Adoption of the SRA recommendations will result in an increased budget requirement of £26,768.

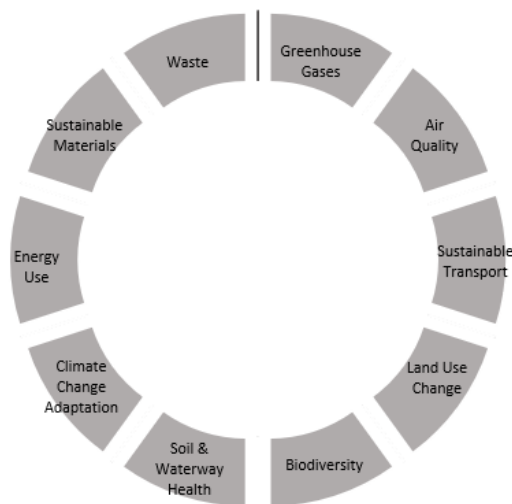
## Legal Implications

11. 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 members’ 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.

## Climate and ecological impact implications

12. There are no climate or ecological impact implications to the panels recommendations. Travel claims remain on the same basis as previously.

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	Significant and/or long-term positive impact identified. No changes needed.
	Slight or short-term positive impact identified. No changes needed but could be reviewed to improve.
	No net change/not applicable
	Chart Area for short-term negative impact identified. Review to identify possible improvements.
	Significant and/or long-term negative impact identified. Changes needed before proceeding.

## Equalities implications

13. The retention of a parental leave policy and carers’ allowance may contribute to increasing the diversity of councillors and make public office more accessible.

## **Risks**

14. There are no direct risks associated with this report. The council has mitigated this by undertaking a risk review as required.

## **Other Implications**

15. None

## **Conclusion**

16. The Independent Remuneration Panel undertook a review of the councillors' allowances scheme in October 2024. Council is requested to consider the recommendations set out in the report and agree a scheme of allowances to run from 1 April 2025.

## **Background Papers**

None