

This report will be made
public 12 November
2019

Report **A/19/19**

To: Council
Date: 20 November 2019
Status: Non executive decision
Head of Paid Service: Susan Priest

SUBJECT: REPORT FROM THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION
PANEL ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES

SUMMARY: This report recommends the consideration of the proposals of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel that the members allowance scheme for elected members of Folkestone and Hythe District Council be amended.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report A/19/19.
2. To consider the recommendations of the Panel as set out in paragraph 2.3 of this report and to decide whether the allowance scheme should be amended with immediate effect.
3. To thank the Independent Remuneration Panel for undertaking the review.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require the Council to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to consider and advise on the scale of members' remuneration.
- 1.2 On 24 July 2019 Council considered report A/19/10 and resolved to appoint a new IRP as the existing members terms of office were coming to an end (minute 34). The Head of Paid Service thought it was appropriate to ask the existing panel to have one final look at the scheme in view of the changes in composition of the Council since the election.

2. THE PANEL'S REPORT

- 2.1 The Panel's report is appended in appendix 1. The profiles of the members of the Panel are in appendix 2.
- 2.2 Members are requested to consider the recommendations of the IRP and make decisions on whether to amend the allowance scheme in the light of the recommendations.
- 2.3 The changes recommended by the Panel are as follows:
 - The Leader of the Council Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) be set at 400 points and protection arrangements be applied in accordance with existing provisions. Note; once the protection arrangements cease to apply this would mean the Leader's SRA would be set at £21,732 per annum
 - The definition of 'Leader of the Opposition' for the purposes of the special responsibility allowance be amended to remove reference to 'minority' when referring to groups. The revised definition to read; "The Leader of the Opposition is defined as the leader of the largest group not forming part of the administration and that in the event of a number of groups of the same size occurring (with no one group being the largest group not being part of the administration) then this SRA should be divided equally between those group leaders.
 - Where the 'Leader of the Opposition' SRA is to be shared equally between two or more group leaders in accordance with the provisions of the scheme then the SRA is to be increased by 50 points to 200 points prior to calculating the relevant share. Note the SRA in the circumstances described above would be set at £10,866 per annum
 - The Council make clear both the aims of the Dependents Carers Allowance scheme and the importance of Councillors being able to claim under the scheme when reporting on Councilor expenses.
 - Paragraph 6 of the Dependents Carers Allowance scheme be amended to read: "The allowance will be paid at either: (a) an hourly rate (or proportion thereof) equivalent to the adult national living wage applicable at the time and to a total of the costs reasonably incurred or (b) paid on the basis of actual invoiced cost from a registered provider approved for the purposes of this scheme by the Monitoring Officer."

- Where an employee benefit scheme adopted by the Council is suitable to be extended to Councillors at no additional cost then discretion should rest with the Head of Paid Service to include Councillors within such a scheme

- The special responsibility allowance for tier 2 committee chairs be discontinued

2.4 The recommendations of the Panel are that these proposals be adopted with immediate effect.

2.5 In addition the panel recommended that:-

“Officers be asked to bring forward a parental leave scheme for consideration by the Council which would provide leave of absence for Councillors in cases of the birth or adoption of a child and that any such scheme, if approved by the Council, should be on the basis of no detrimental impact on an individual’s basic allowance and the ICT allowance but that any SRA cease to be paid during the period when the special responsibilities are no longer being undertaken”.

2.6 A further report on this aspect be brought forward shortly for members to consider.

2.7 Furthermore the panel made the following recommendation, not strictly relating to the allowance scheme namely:-

“The Council consider the merits of conducting a trial of daytime meetings with a view to reducing the workload and time commitments for Councillors”.

2.8 The Head of Paid Service will discuss with group leaders this recommendation to ascertain whether there is any desire to change the Council’s current practice.

2.9 The Panel also recommended that:-

“If changes to governance arrangements currently being considered are to proceed then it is recommended that the new Panel is convened to carry out a review at that time. Whether or not such changes proceed, it is recommended that the new Panel be reconvened to review the scheme in 2023 following the local elections”.

3. LEGAL / FINANCIAL AND OTHER POLICY MATTERS

3.1 Legal officer’s comments (AK)

All relevant legal issues have been addressed in the report.

3.2 Finance officer’s comments (CS)

The cost of the proposed scheme can be contained within the existing budget.

3.3 Diversities and equalities implications (AK)

All relevant issues have been addressed in the report

4. CONTACT OFFICER AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising from this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting:

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Background documents

None.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – The report from the Independent Remuneration Panel
Appendix – Profiles of Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel