

WEST DEVON BOROUGH COUNCIL

INDEPENDENT PANEL ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES AND PARISH REMUNERATION PANEL – REVIEW OF THE CURRENT SCHEME

Background to West Devon Borough Council's Scheme of Members' Allowances and Issues for Consideration

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide members of the newly formed Independent Panel with information to enable them to make recommendations to the Council on a revised Scheme of Members' Allowances.

It is intended that the Panel's recommendations will be presented (via a report) to a special meeting of the Borough Council on 31 March 2015.

This review has been prompted following the decision of the Council to fundamentally revise its governance arrangements with effect from May 2015.

These revisions are summarised in the table below:-

Before May 2015	After May 2015
Two day to day decision-making Committees: a Resources Committee (11 Members) and a Community Services Committee (10 Members).	One day to day decision-making Committee: a Hub Committee (9 Members).
No lead Member responsibilities for Resources and Community Services Committee Members.	Hub Committee Members will have lead Member responsibility for different service areas of the Council. However, these responsibilities will not extend to single decision-making powers.
Resources and Community Services Committee scheduled to meet 5 times each per year.	Hub Committee will be scheduled to meet 10 times per year.
One Overview and Scrutiny Committee (10 Members).	Two Overview and Scrutiny Committees (each to have 11 Members, so each WD Member will sit on one of either the Hub Committee or the two O+S Committees).
The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meets 4 times per year.	Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be scheduled to meet 5 times per year.
Provision for substitutes to be appointed on to any of these Committees.	No provision for substitutes to be appointed on to any of these Committees.

The Panel is asked to focus this review on the following issues:-

- Should the Basic Allowance be increased?
- Should the current list of roles entitled to claim a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) be amended?
- Should any of the multipliers applied to the SRAs be amended?

1. Basic Allowance

Payment of a Basic Allowance to all 31 Members at the same rate is mandatory. The Basic Allowance in the current financial year is **£4,133.40**.

In addition to the Basic Allowance, the Council has adopted an IT Policy whereby any Member who wishes to use their own IT equipment (instead of Council provided equipment) is entitled to claim an additional £400 per annum. With effect from May 2015, it is likely that the Council will be adopting a 'Managed Council Devices' approach to IT, which will therefore result in the current Policy being negated and Members no longer being entitled to claim the additional £400 per annum.

A request has been made for the Panel to consider whether or not the Basic Allowance should now be increased.

As a guide, for other local authorities in Devon, the Basic Allowance is currently as follows:

- East Devon District Council: **£4,360**;
- Mid Devon District Council: **£4,500**;
- North Devon District Council: **£4,570**;
- South Hams District Council: **£4,386**;
- Teignbridge District Council: **£4,969.45**; and
- Torridge District Council: **£4,568.64 (plus £360 towards electronic expenses)**.

If the Panel is minded to recommend an increase in the Basic Allowance at this time, it may wish to consider a number of national indices when assessing what any increase might be.

Retail Price Index (RPI)

If the Panel wishes to recommend applying this Index (1.1% for the year to December 2014) to an increase, then the Basic Allowance would be increased by £45.47 to **£4,178.87** per annum.

RPIX (Retail Price Index excluding mortgage interest payments)

If the Panel wishes to recommend applying this Index (1.2% for the year to December 2014) to an increase, then the Basic Allowance would be increased by £49.60 to **£4,183** per annum.

Consumer Price Index (CPI)

If the Panel wishes to recommend applying this Index (0.3% for the year to January 2015) to an increase, then the Basic Allowance would be increased by £12.40 to **£4,145.80** per annum.

Aligning to recent Staff Pay Awards

The Panel may also feel it appropriate to recommend a Basic Allowance increase in line with the most recent staff pay award (2.2% for 2015/16). If so, then the Basic Allowance would be increased by £90.93 to **£4,224.33** per annum.

2. Special Responsibility Allowances

Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) are payable at the Council's discretion to those Members who have significant additional responsibilities over and above the generally accepted duties of a councillor.

The Scheme currently includes provision to pay nine SRAs to Council Members (see attached at Appendix A). There is no limit on the number of SRAs that can be paid.

The specific issues which have been identified as being relevant to this Review are:-

(a) Vice-Chairmen Allowances

Currently, only the Vice-Chairman of the Resources Committee is in receipt of a SRA (largely by virtue of also being the Deputy Leader of Council). During previous reviews, the former Panel reaffirmed its belief that the payment of SRAs should be 'limited to the Chairmen of Committees'.

Due to the extent of the workload associated with the role, the Vice-Chairman of the Planning and Licensing Committee has asked that the Panel also give specific consideration to the merits of this role being entitled to receive an SRA.

(b) Hub Committee Members

An underlying principle of the new Governance arrangements is that Hub Committee Members will be responsible for different service areas of the Council (a proposed role profile and the respective areas of responsibility (which have been endorsed by the Political Structures Working Group) are attached at Appendix B).

The Panel is asked to consider whether Hub Committee Members should be in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance and, if so, what Multiplier should be applied. It is recognised that the workloads for the Hub Committee Members will vary and a Member has requested that the Panel give consideration to whether a different Multiplier should be applied depending on anticipated workload amongst the Hub Committee Members. As a guide, the Working Group did not support this view and felt that, regardless of workload, if a Hub Committee Member was entitled to claim a SRA, then it should be at the same level for all.

(c) Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen

With the creation of two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the Panel is requested to consider, in light of the greater emphasis to be given to this function in the new Council, the multiplier which should be applied to the Chairmen of these two Committees.

(d) Number of SRAs Entitled to Claim

The current Scheme only makes provision for the receipt of one SRA. However, it is possible for the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor to be able to claim an SRA and a Civic Allowance, since the Civic Allowance is separated from the list of SRAs.

The Panel is asked to consider whether it retains the view that Members should only be entitled to claim one SRA and whether the Civic Allowances should be included within the list of SRAs and kept separate.

Also, the Panel is asked to consider whether it wishes to recommend retention of the current SRA descriptions particularly in respect of the Leader and Deputy Leader Allowance being 'merged' with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Resources Committee roles.

(e) Current Multipliers Applied to SRAs

As part of this Review, the Panel is also asked to give its views in respect of whether the current Multipliers applied to each of the existing SRAs is appropriate.

In so doing, some Members have requested that the Panel consider their belief that the disparity between the Basic Allowance and the current multipliers is too large and the gap should therefore be closed to give greater parity of remuneration across the whole membership.

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