

Rother District Council

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 6 February 2023

Title: Members' Allowance Scheme 2023-2027

Report of: Malcolm Johnston, Chief Executive

Cabinet Member: Councillor Oliver

Ward(s): -

Purpose of Report: To present the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on their recommendations for the Members' Allowance Scheme to be paid for the period 2023-2027.

Decision Type: Key

Officer

Recommendation(s): **Recommendation to COUNCIL:** That

- 1) Cabinet considers the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, comments thereon as appropriate and refers the recommendations to Council to determine; and
- 2) the Chief Executive be granted delegated authority to amend the Scheme within the Constitution, following approval of the allowances to be paid, in light of the suggested amendments.

Reasons for

Recommendations: Before an authority makes or amends its allowance scheme, the authority shall have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).

Introduction

1. In accordance with the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, before an authority makes or amends its allowance scheme, the authority shall have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).
2. Rother District Council (RDC) last set its allowances in 2019 which applied to the current Council Term 2019-2023.
3. As Members may recall, in May last year, the Cabinet agreed to recruit a new IRP to undertake a review and make recommendations on the allowances to be paid for the incoming Council administration 2023-2027 (Minute CB21/105 refers).

Process

4. In accordance with the 2003 Regulations, following a recruitment exercise, the following persons were appointed to the IRP: Clive Mills, MIHM, retired Public
cb230206 – Members' Allowance Scheme

Services Senior Manager (re-appointment), Hazel Bentall, MRCVS, veterinary consultant, regulator and Ruth Wilson, local authority HR Manager Recruitment and Reward.

5. The members of the IRP have between them considerable experience in local government and membership of other remuneration committees for other local authorities. In accordance with paragraph 20 (3) of the 2003 Regulations, the Council has paid an allowance and expenses incurred by the IRP members in carrying out its functions.
6. The Panel as constituted met on four occasions for the purposes of undertaking this review, interviewed key Members and officers and been in receipt of detailed documentation as background information in connection with the review process. As a comparison, the table set out at Appendix A provides details of the allowances paid by the other East Sussex local authorities in 2012/22.
7. The IRP's full report is attached as Appendix B.
8. The IRP also considered the wording of the Members' Allowance Scheme as published within the Constitution and have recommended some changes to simplify the language and make it more accessible. It is recommended that the Chief Executive be granted delegated authority to amend the Scheme within the Constitution, following approval of the allowances to be paid, in light of the suggested amendments.

Recommendations

9. The IRP have made a total of 15 recommendations as detailed within the report, with the key highlights including:
 - that the Basic Allowance be increased by 5%;
 - that the proposed allowances be set for one year only, subject to a further review in 2023;
 - the dependent / childcare allowances be increased to £14.00 and £10.42 respectively with provision to pay a higher amount subject to prior approval;
 - that SRAs be paid as a ratio of the Basic Allowance;
 - that the Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee be paid an SRA;
 - that the SRA for the Other Political Group Leaders be increased and the per member amount be removed to simplify administration;
 - that each of the subsistence allowances, breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner be increased by approximately 10% and reviewed in 2023;
 - that the Human Resources Committee be invited to consider if the staff and Members subsistence rates should be matched; and
 - that the Members Allowance Scheme within the Constitution be updated to simplify the language and make it more accessible.

Financial Implications

10. Overall, should the recommendations be supported this would represent an approximate 5% increase on the allowances' budget. Currently, should all allowances and SRAs be paid, the budget requirement would be approximately £229,625.00 (excluding payments to Group Leaders as difficult for comparison below as number of Groups and Members per Group is

unknown). At the current time, as a number of Members fulfil two roles that attract an SRA, only the higher SRA is paid, this equates to £226,637, representing a saving of £2,988.

11. From May 2023 should all allowances and SRAs be paid, the budget requirement would be in the region of £241,141 (excluding payments to Group Leaders). Should the same scenario occur with Members fulfilling two roles as current, the requirement would be £237,190, a saving of approximately £3,951. The costs have been included in the 2023/24 revenue budget.

Legal implications

12. The authority is not able to make or amend its allowance scheme before having regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).

Environmental

13. The carbon footprint of this review was kept to a minimum by holding all meetings via MS Teams and all documentation / drafting of reports electronically, with very little hard copy material being produced.
14. As part of the research carried out for the review, it was established that the mileage rate for a fully electric vehicle is 8p per mile (compared to 45p per mile for petrol / diesel / hybrid) and this will be included within the revised scheme published within the Constitution.

Risk assessment

15. The current Scheme of Allowances extends only for the duration of the life of this Council; failure to agree a new Scheme would result in the existing scheme being retained as is, with no annual uplift.
16. Failure to implement a fair and reasonable Members' Allowance Scheme may prevent some potential candidates from standing for election. The scheme should provide an adequate level of financial support, whilst recognising an element of public service, to enable candidates to stand for election from all demographics of the community.

Conclusion

17. Cabinet is requested to consider the recommendations made by the IRP, comment thereon and refer all recommendations to full Council, this will enable a full and robust debate by all Members on the Allowance Scheme.
18. Whilst in the interests of economy and administration the Council had requested that the IRP made recommendations on allowances for the 4 year period (2023-2027), the rationale for recommending a one year increase is noted.
19. Should Council approve the recommendations, it will be necessary for the Council to reconvene the IRP in Autumn 2023 to review the allowances to be set for the remainder of the Council term 2024-27.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	Yes
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	Yes	Exempt from publication	No

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Appendices:	Appendix A – Comparison Data Appendix B – IRP Full Report
Relevant Previous Minutes:	CB22/105
Background Papers:	None.
Reference Documents:	None.

Appendix A

Comparison Data for other East Sussex Authorities 2021/22

Allowance	Rother District (38 Members)	Wealden District (45 Members)	Lewes District (41 Members)	Hastings Borough (32 Members)	Eastbourne Borough (27 Members)	East Sussex County Council (50 Members)
Basic	4,703.00	4,846.20	3,196.00	6,429.00	2,808.00	13,379.00
Leader	13,735.00	14,169.60	14,821.00	12,861.00	4,212.00	37,461.00
Deputy Leader	3,873.00	N/A	N/A	8,364.00	2,808.00	19,121.00
Cabinet Member	2,988.00	5,857.92	5,928.00	6,945.00	2,808.00	16,389.00
Audit Committee C	2,186.00	3,963.72	4,446.00	3,216.00	N/A	6,828.00
Licensing Committee C	2,186.00	1,439.16	60.00	1,047.00	1,404.00	N/A
Planning Committee C	2,988.00	4,464.96	4,446.00	3,861.00	2,106.00	6,828.00
Planning Committee V-C	N/A	1,476.00	741.00	1,413.00	-	-
OSC Chair	2,988.00	3,963.72	3,557.00	3,216.00	1,404.00	6,828.00
Opposition Group Leader	468.00 +£82.00 per Member	1,125.54 plus 184.50 per Member	4,446.00	1,377 + 192.52 per Member	2,106.00	13,655.00
Carers' Allowances	£11.00 elderly £9.00 childcare	£12 per hour	£10.70 per hour	In line with living wage rate	Up to £8.80 per hour (basic) and up to £13.18 per hour (specialist)	Actual cost up to £15 per hour