

Joint Independent Remuneration Panel

Report on revised allowances for members following change of committee structure at Sevenoaks District Council, June 2013

Background

At the annual Meeting on 14th May 2013 Sevenoaks District Council changed its committee structure as result of which you have asked the JIRP to review the members allowances now payable in the new structure. You have aslo asked that in considering our recommendations we bear in mind that any proposed changes should be cost neutral.

It should be noted that, while we fully appreciate the financial and political constraints under which the Council operates, our role is to recommend allowances which take into account members' workload, responsibilities and required time commitment, with the overall aim of broadening the diversity of councillor representation by minimising financial barriers to participation. Affordability is an issue for the Council to decide.

We understand that the main differences that arise from the new structure are:

- Ten additional Deputy Cabinet Members
- Five advisory committees replacing the existing two
- The removal of the Performance and Governance Committee
- The addition of an Audit Committee
- The addition of a Governance Committee
- The creation of a single Scrutiny Committee
- The removal of the select committees

Process

To consider the implications of these changes to members allowances we have reviewed the existing and proposed governance structure, the membership of the proposed committees and the content of the roles undertaken as set out in the Council's work plans, role descriptions and terms of reference. We have also tried to take into account the projected numbers of meetings for the various committees since potential workload is a key driver of the level of allowances. We have also had a meeting with the Democratic Services Manager to try and establish the likely impact of these changes on that workload.

It should also be noted that as this is a new and evolving structure any conclusions reached can only be tentative at this stage and will need to be reviewed in the light of experience and after the structure has been operating for at least one annual cycle.

Conclusions and recommendations

The creation of ten new roles of Deputy Cabinet Member will help to spread the workload of the Cabinet Members, though they will still retain their overall accountability for their portfolios. Therefore, while there may be a reduction in the workload of the Cabinet Member, which should be reflected in the level of the Special Responsibility Allowance, the scale of this reduction should be relatively minor. The amount of the reduction can be allocated proportionately to the Deputy Cabinet Members since the overall workload of the Cabinet remains broadly the same.

We recommend, therefore, that the the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Cabinet Members be reduced from the JIRP 2013 recommended level of £9059, representing 150% of the Basic Allowance of £6039, to £7549 representing 125% of the Basic Allowance.

We recommend that the difference between the previous level of allowance and the new recommended level for Cabinet Members be paid to Deputy Cabinet members to reflect their additional responsibilities. As there are two deputies for each Cabinet Member this reduction of 25% of the Basic Allowance would need to be split between two giving each an allowance of 12.5% of the Basic Allowance ie £755 per annum.

The planned number of Advisory Committee meetings (4) is similar to those of the former select committees (4-5) so it seems logical that that the committee chair allowance should remain at the same level as recommended in our 2012 report ie £3020 per annum, equating to 50% of the Basic Allowance.

We understand the Audit, Scrutiny and Governance Committees are also likely to hold 4-5 meetings per annum so again the allowance for the chairs of these committees should remain at £3020 per annum.

Our 2012 report recommended that no payments should be made to committee vice-chairs and we see no reason to change this.

No further changes to the allowances are proposed.

We recommend that all these recommended allowances be reviewed one year after the implementation of the new structure.

Summary of Recommended Allowances

Allowance	2013 JIRP Recommendation	Proposed Allowance
Basic Allowance	£6039	£6039
Cabinet Member	£9059	£7549
Deputy Cabinet Member	N/A	£755
Advisory Committee Chairs:		
Strategy & Performance	N/A	£3020
Economic & Community Development	N/A	£3020
Finance & Resources	N/A	£3020
Housing & Community Safety	N/A	£3020
Local Planning & Environment	N/A	£3020
Audit Committee Chair	N/A	£3020
Scrutiny Committee Chair	N/A	£3020
Governance Committee Chair	N/A	£3020
Development Control Committee Chair	£4530	£4530

NB All figures are per annum.