

REVIEW OF THE SCHEME FOR MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

Council – 20 February 2024

Report of: Monitoring Officer

Status: For decision

Also considered by:

- Governance Committee – 30 January 2024

Contact Officer: Martin Goodman, ext. 7245; Adrian Rowbotham, ext. 7153

Recommendation to Governance Committee: That the below recommendations be made to Council.

Recommendation to Council: That the recommendations of the Members' Allowances Working Group set out in the report be adopted as follows:

- (a) The recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel be agreed subject to the following changes:
 - i. The Deputy Leader continue to be remunerated at £13,269 but this allowance be frozen until such a time as the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel determines the sum to fall within 10% of the Kent Councils Deputy Leader allowance mean;
 - ii. Opposition Group Leaders continue to be remunerated at £298 per group Member;
 - iii. Subsistence allowances be maintained at the £9.86/£12.21 for lunch/evening meal, subject to the Member being on Council business out of the District;
- (b) The Joint Independent Remuneration Panel be requested to undertake the next review of allowances in advance of the next election cycle.

Reason for recommendation: To reflect the decision of the Members' Allowances Working Group.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Members will recall that the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (JIRP) made certain recommendations, which were reported to the Governance Committee in June 2023. It is recommended that Members refer to the relevant report and appendices when considering this item.

2 A summary of their proposed changes is set out in the following table:

	Current	JIRP Recommendation
Deputy Leader	£13,269	£10,505
Opposition leaders:	£298 per Member	£5,529 if group has more than five Members
Examples:		
14 Members in group:	£4,172	£5,529
4 Members in group:	£1,192	£0
2 Members in group:	£596	£0
Subsistence:		
Lunch	£9.86	£0
Evening Meal	£12.21	£0

- 3 The report of the JIRP is attached as Appendix A. The report of the Members Allowances Working Group, set up to consider the JIRP report, is attached as Appendix B.
- 4 Members are invited to approve the findings of the Working Group and adopt their recommendations.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

Members have the full range of options open to them, including taking no action at all. If no action is taken, Member allowances will remain as they are. Whichever option is taken, allowances will continue to be updated annually in line with the National Joint Council for Local Government Services pay award.

Key Implications

Financial

The recommendations in the report are within budgetary provision. Nevertheless, if the recommendations of the JIRP are not adopted and an increase above the cost of the current scheme is agreed, savings will need to be found for the year 2023/24 and a growth item will be needed for the 2024/25 budget process.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The Council is required under the Local authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and subsequent amendments to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to review and make recommendations to the Council on the range and levels of remuneration for elected Members.

Under the regulations, the Council is required to undertake a full review every four years. A full review was last considered by the Council on 21 November 2017, with its recommendations adopted with effect from May 2019.

Remuneration for Members is intended to ensure that there are no avoidable obstacles preventing people from taking part in the work of the Council. The level of remuneration needs to be at an appropriate level. Any deviation from the recommendations should be justified with a written record being made.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the District, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Conclusions

The basis of the current level of Members' Allowances for Sevenoaks District Council was established by the Panel in December 2001 following guidance issued by central government. Allowances have been revised following later Panel's recommendations to reflect the changing roles of Members. Until now, any changes have always kept within budget. Members are requested to consider the contents of this report, the previous report and all appendices before making a decision.

Appendix A - Recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

Appendix B - Members' Allowances Working Group report.

Martin Goodman

Monitoring Officer