

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

A SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES FOR 2019/20

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council's Independent Remuneration Panel is comprised of four members of the public who live in Tewkesbury Borough. They have served on the Panel since 2015 and have built up a considerable knowledge of allowance schemes.
- 1.2 In January 2018 the Panel presented its report to Council which recommended that, other than a few minor wording changes to clarify a couple of provisions within the scheme, there should be no other changes to the 2017/18 scheme for 2018/19. The Council accepted the report of the Panel and the scheme shown at Annex A took effect on 1 April 2018 and is due to expire on 31 March 2019.
- 1.3 In September 2018 the Panel commenced work on proposals for a scheme to take effect on 1 April 2019.

2. WORK OF THE PANEL

- 2.1 As part of its work, the Panel considered the following information:
- Allowances received by Tewkesbury Borough Councillors in 2017/18.
 - Comparison of allowances for Gloucestershire and South West Councils.
 - Comparison of allowances for Councils in England operating a Committee structure.
- 2.2 The Panel also met with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, an Independent Member and the Head of Finance and Asset Management.

3. SUMMARY OF THE PANEL'S FINDINGS / CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The main points that the Panel concluded from its work are as set out below:
- Comparative data shows Tewkesbury Borough basic allowance remains substantially higher than other Districts in the County and across the South West.
 - Previous comparative data had shown the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) paid by the Council to be on the low side and the Panel had recommended increases in those allowances on two occasions and had introduced an additional allowance for Support Members which had been well received. However, the Panel did not feel there was any scope to make any further changes to SRAs for next year's scheme.

- The need to attract a wider demographic of people to become Councillors was understood but it was considered that this was not just about the financial incentives offered and there was more work required nationally to do to attract a wider range of candidates. The fact that Tewkesbury Borough currently had one of the highest basic allowances meant it should be more attractive than some if finances were a big influencing factor.
- There was concern that a continued freeze in the basic allowance would be demotivating, particularly as it seemed there was an increasing time commitment and complexity of work as the nature of the Council changed and it needed to be more creative and commercial and work with partners. There was no doubt that Councillors worked exceptionally hard and were very committed to the cause of helping their communities. Nevertheless, taking account of the comparative data, as well as being mindful of the Council's financial position, the Panel did not feel that a recommendation to increase the allowances could be justified. Equally important, it was felt that a reduction in the allowances would not be appropriate.
- The period of the scheme should remain at one year in order that comparative data could continue to be kept under review and changes made should the position change.

4. RECOMMENDATION OF THE PANEL

- 4.1 That the scheme shown at Annex A be rolled on for a further year without any change.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Panel's recommendation results in no change to the current financial commitment.