

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Tewkesbury Borough Council Independent Remuneration Panel was established pursuant to the provisions of the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

1.2 The current Panel, which was established in 2015, comprises:

Mr Richard Blamey (Chair)

Mr Hugh Laird

Mrs Sue Lambert

Mr Andrew Turner

1.3 In January 2016, the Panel recommended an Allowances Scheme to the Council for the financial year 2016/17 which, in essence, kept the Basic Allowance the same but increased the amount payable for Special Responsibility Allowances to give greater recognition to those Members who undertook roles with added responsibilities and to bring the Council's Scheme more in line with other Schemes across the country.

2. WORK OF THE PANEL

2.1 To assist with the preparation of the Scheme of Allowances for 2017/18 the Panel considered a variety of information which included:

- Allowances received by Tewkesbury Borough Councillors in 2015/16.
- Comparison of Allowances for Gloucestershire and South West Councils.
- Comparison of Allowances for Councils in England operating a Committee structure.
- Tewkesbury Borough Council Special Responsibility Allowances paid for 2016/17.
- Comparison of Basic Allowances and Special Responsibility Allowances to be paid for 2016 – Gloucestershire and sample of South West Councils.

2.2 The Panel also met with the following Councillors over three sessions:

- Councillor Kay Berry – Lead Member for Community.
- Councillor Derek Davies – Lead Member for Built Environment.
- Councillor David Foyle – Elected to Tewkesbury Borough Council in May 2015.
- Councillor Mike Dean – Lead Member for Customer Focus.
- Councillor Harry Turbyfield – Deputy Mayor.
- Councillor Ruth Hatton - Elected to Tewkesbury Borough Council in May 2015.

Appendix 1

- Councillor Jim Mason – Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment.
- Councillor Elaine MacTiernan – Lead Member for Organisational Development.
- Councillor Rob Garnham – Chair of Licensing Committee.
- Councillor Robert Vines - Leader of the Council.
- Councillor Dave Waters – Deputy Leader of the Council.
- Councillor Gill Blackwell – Mayor / Support Member for the Corporate Portfolio.
- Councillor Alex Evans – Elected to Tewkesbury Borough Council in May 2015.

A summary of some of the points arising from those discussions is set out below:

- Workload and responsibilities were increasing resulting in all roles requiring a large time commitment which had come as quite a surprise to new Members on the Council. The role required seven days' a week commitment as the public expected to be able to contact their Councillor at any time.
- There was a concern that one or two Members only attended meetings of the Council but received the same allowance as all Members.
- Support Members attended briefings and other meetings but there was no financial recognition for this role.
- It was becoming increasingly difficult to attract people to stand as Councillors, particularly young people, which was due to a number of factors including financial but also the time commitment and impact on family life as well as work and career prospects.
- The proposals put forward by the Independent Remuneration Panel for the 2016/17 Scheme of Allowances were generally felt to be fair and appropriate and the philosophy to reward people who did the work was the right one.
- The majority of Members felt that the Basic Allowance was reasonable but a minority felt that, bearing in mind the Basic Allowance had been cut and then frozen for several years, it was now time for it to be increased.
- Remuneration was not the motivating factor in standing for the Council with many Members expressing the view that it was a privilege and honour to serve the community and, although financial recognition was appreciated, nothing beat getting a 'win' for the community or helping someone in need.

2.3 The Panel met with the Council's Chief Executive, Mike Dawson, and a summary of some of the points covered is set out below:

- The Council's budgetary position had deteriorated further with a deficit of £2.9 million over the next five years against a net spend of £8.6 million.
- The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy did not include Members' Allowances as a growth item. Growth in this area was not planned and would need to be considered along with all the other growth items.
- Remuneration for Members was not recompense for the work that they undertook. It was the role of the Panel to strike a balance between adequate recompense and the perception of what was reasonable to the public.

- The proposal for the current year had seemed to find favour with Members and had increased the budget by about 1% which would not be insurmountable for the future. Staff had received a pay rise of 1% for the current financial year.
- Getting younger people on the Council and achieving a broader spectrum of age range would be beneficial. However, finance was only a small part of the problem with time and commitment playing a big part. Political parties needed to engage with younger people.
- The majority of Members did a really good job because they cared about their communities. They made themselves available at any time of the day or night and financially it was not feasible to pay them for everything they did it was more about recognition and the level that should be set at was for the Panel to determine.

2.4 The Panel had attended an Extraordinary meeting of the Council on 25 October 2016 and observed the role of Members at meetings.

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:

- Money was not the motivator for standing as a Councillor, it was the enabler.
- The majority of Members were hard working and committed to the role which was very impressive.
- A broader age range and encouraging more young people to join the Council could not be achieved with financial recompense alone. The willingness to commit the time with the resultant impact on personal time and career, as well as a desire to give back and contribute to the community, were the overriding factors.
- The cost of the Council's Scheme per resident was the highest in Gloucestershire and third highest across the Country of comparable authorities.
- Although there had been some catch-up on the Basic Allowance, Tewkesbury's remained the highest and the Panel did not feel that an increase in the Basic Allowance could be recommended.
- Special Responsibility Allowances were still marginally lower than other authorities and the Panel remained very much in favour of the principle that there should be a strong link between responsibility and payment.
- Staff had received a pay rise of 1% in the current year which, when applied to the total budget for the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances of £331,644, provided a figure of £3,316.44 which could be used to increase Special Responsibility Allowances.
- Support Members did not receive any recognition for the role that they undertook but as this would be a new category of Special Responsibility Allowance the funding should not be included in the 1%.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL

4.1 That the Scheme of Allowances for 2017/18 be as follows:

- A Basic Allowance of £7,200.
- Special Responsibility Allowances be increased as set out below:

	Current 2016/17	Proposed 2017/18
Leader of the Council	£8,400	£8,800
Deputy Leader	£6,300	£6,600
Lead Members (7)	£4,200 each	£4,400 each
Committee Chairmen (5)	£2,100 each	£2,200 each
Planning Committee		
Licensing Committee		
Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Audit Committee		
Standards Committee		
Mayor	£2,100	£2,200
Deputy Mayor	£1,300	£1,350

- A new Special Responsibility Allowance be added for the nine Support Members each receiving a sum of £175 to provide some recognition of the additional work undertaken.
- All other aspects of the current Scheme of Allowances remain unchanged.

4.2 The Panel also recommend that the Council consider including an inflationary increase on the Members Allowance budget within the Medium Term Financial Strategy to allow greater scope for amending the Scheme in future. The Panel felt constrained by the fact that there was no long term plan in place to increase the base budget for Allowances.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The total cost of the recommendations of the Panel is £4,325 representing a 1.3% increase on the budget for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances which accommodated a growth item with the introduction of a new Special Responsibility Allowance for Support Members.