

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 2017, the Panel recommended an Allowances Scheme to the Council for the financial year 2017/18 which, in essence, kept the Basic Allowance the same but increased the amount payable for Special Responsibility Allowances and added a new Special Responsibility Allowance for Support Members to give recognition to those Members who undertook roles with added responsibilities.

2. WORK OF THE PANEL

2.1 To assist with the preparation of the Scheme of Allowances for 2018/19 the Panel considered a variety of information which included:

- Allowances received by Tewkesbury Borough Councillors in 2016/17.
- 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 2017/18.
- Comparison of Basic Allowances and Special Responsibility Allowances to be paid for 2017 – Gloucestershire and sample of South West Councils.

2.2 The Panel also met with the Head of Finance and Asset Management, Simon Dix, and the Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management, Councillor Ron Furolo.

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.
- Special Responsibility Allowances seem to be more in line with other Districts following increases recommended by the Panel in recent years.
- Acknowledgment that Councillors are very hard working and committed to improving their communities and the Borough as a whole.
- Difficult to see how anything other than a freeze on allowances for 2018/19 can be justified based on comparative data and the Council's financial position.

3.2 A lack of clarity had been highlighted during the recent audit of the Member Allowances Scheme. The Panel considered this matter and agreed that it was not clear within the Special Responsibility Allowances that the Leader of the Council would not get allowances both for being the Leader of the Council and a Lead Member. The Panel **AGREED** that, for the avoidance of doubt, the 2018 Scheme would be amended so that, in Schedule 1 after Leader and Deputy Leader, a line would be inserted to read '***(inclusive of Lead Member role)***'. The audit had also suggested that the Dependent Carer's Allowance be amended to either include the correct hourly rate for the Living Wage or not to refer to a specific hourly amount at all. Members considered the issue but felt they would like the amount per hour to remain in the Scheme; it was therefore **AGREED** that Paragraph 2.1 of the Dependents' Care Scheme be amended to read "The maximum rate payable by way of reimbursement has been fixed at ~~£7.20~~ **£7.50** per hour, in line with the living wage, with no overall daily maximum. This will be reviewed on an annual basis. ~~This will remain unchanged for the period of the Scheme~~".

4. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL

4.1 That the Scheme of Allowances for 2018/19 be unchanged from the 2017/18 Scheme except for the following two minor amendments as referred to above:

- Special Responsibility Allowances section to be amended so that, in Schedule 1 after Leader and Deputy Leader, a line would be inserted to read '***(inclusive of Lead Member role)***'.
- Paragraph 2.1 of the Dependents' Care Scheme to be amended to read "The maximum rate payable by way of reimbursement has been fixed at ~~£7.20~~ **£7.50** per hour, in line with the living wage, with no overall daily maximum. This will be reviewed on an annual basis. ~~This will remain unchanged for the period of the Scheme~~".

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As there are no current claimants of the Dependant Carers Scheme, the recommendations of the Panel do not have any financial implications. However, the Panel would still recommend that the Medium Term Financial Strategy should make provision for increases in the Member allowances budget in order that there should be flexibility to increase allowances if appropriate during the next annual review of the Scheme.