

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances 2024

Executive Summary	<p>This report makes recommendations to Full Council on the allowances and expenses to be paid to Members to take effect from 01 May 2024. In accordance with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, the Council established an Independent Remuneration Panel at the meeting of Full Council held on 20 September 2023. The terms of reference for the Panel were also agreed at the September meeting of Full Council.</p> <p>Although members can choose not to support the recommendations of the Panel, the legislation requires the following: 'Before an authority makes or amends a scheme, it shall have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by an independent remuneration panel'. The findings and recommendations of the Panel are detailed in this report.</p>
Options considered	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To support all of the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP)2. To support some of the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), whilst rejecting some.3. To reject all of the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP)
Consultation(s)	<p>Members were consulted throughout the process. They were invited to submit comments for the IRP to consider and a survey was circulated for completion. Two group leaders met with the panel to share their views.</p>
Recommendations	<p>That Members consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, adopt a scheme of allowances and amend the Constitution accordingly.</p> <p>Specifically, it is recommended that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a) the Basic Allowance should increase to £6,491 pa (to include £180 Broadband Allowance);b) the Scheme should remain index linked to officers' pay awardsc) the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Leader of the Council should remain calculated by way of a multiplier of x2 the basic allowance;d) A new SRA for the Deputy Leader should be introduced, calculated by way of a multiplier of x1.6 the basic allowancee) the SRA for Cabinet Members with Portfolio should remain calculated by way of a multiplier of x1.33 the

	<p>basic allowance;</p> <p>f) the SRA for Chairmen of Committees of the Council (except Development Committee, Licensing Committee and Standards Committee) should remain calculated by way of a multiplier of x0.67 the basic allowance;</p> <p>g) the SRA for the Chairman of Development Committee to remain at x0.75 of the basic allowance, with the SRA for the Vice-chairman of Development Committee remaining at x0.25 of the basic allowance.</p> <p>h) Payments for the Chairmen of Standards Committee and Licensing Committee should be based on a per meeting payment of 2% of the Basic Allowance</p> <p>i) A new payment for Chairmen of Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party to be introduced based on a per meeting payment of 2% of the basic Allowance or £129.82.</p> <p>j) SRA payments to leaders of the opposition groups should move to a flat SRA rather than being based on the number within the group.</p> <p>k) The SRA for the Leader of the main opposition group should be calculated by a way of a multiplier of x0.4</p> <p>l) The SRA for the Leader of the smaller opposition group should be calculated by means of a multiplier of x0.15</p> <p>m) The SRA for the Chairman of the Council should remain the same and be calculated by means of a multiplier of x0.5, with the Vice-Chairman of the Council remaining on the multiplier of x0.25</p> <p>n) Member champion roles should not receive an SRA but should be eligible for travel and subsistence payments</p> <p>o) A role description should be produced for member champions and should be published on the Council's website</p> <p>p) A new 'family and friends' rate for carer's allowance of up to £10 per hour should be introduced, to support councillors in their role and ensure no-one is disadvantaged by caring responsibilities.</p> <p>q) The Democratic Services Manager to have delegation to consider payments for carers' allowance on a case by case basis, allowing a higher rate in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>r) Travel and subsistence rates to remain the same.</p> <p>s) <i>Any temporary increases to staff mileage rates will also apply to members.</i></p>
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Reasons for recommendations	An independent review of the Councils Scheme of Members' Allowances at least every 4 years, is a statutory requirement. Full Council must consider the recommendations of the IRP before reaching a decision.
Background papers	Previous IRP report February 2020 Comparison data from neighbouring authorities Survey responses from members

Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr T Adams
Contact Officer	Emma Denny, Democratic Services Manager Emma.denny@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	Not applicable. A review of the Members' Allowances Scheme is a statutory requirement.
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	N/A
Council Policies & Strategies	N/A

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	No
Has the public interest test been applied	This item is not exempt.
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	Full Council, February 2020.

1. Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Full Council the allowances and expenses to be paid to Members to take effect from 01 May 2024. In accordance with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, the Council set up an Independent Remuneration Panel at the meeting of Full Council held on 20 September 2023. The terms of reference for the Panel were also agreed at the September meeting of Full Council.

The Council is required to observe, as part of the legislation, the following; 'before an authority makes or amends a scheme, it shall have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by an independent remuneration panel'. The findings and recommendations of the Panel are detailed in this report.

1.1 Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP)

The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), was appointed for a 4-year term with effect from 20 September 2023 and consists of 3 members;

Ivor Holden, Sandra Cox and Derek Blake MBE

The Chair of the Panel was selected by its members at the start of the first meeting where it was agreed that Ivor Holden would be the Chairman.

- 1.2 The IRP met on 12th October, 8th, 21st, 28th November and 6th December 2023 to consider the available evidence before making the recommendations being put to the Council. A survey was issued to members and 21 responses were received. The Panel was assisted throughout the process by the Democratic Services Manager.
- 1.3 The Panel agreed the terms of reference as outlined below in section 2 of this report and were appraised of the full range of roles covered by members in carrying out their duties as District Councillors in relation to the current Scheme of Members' Allowances.
- 1.4 Consideration was given to the terms of reference of the Council's committees and the frequency they meet as per the published programme of meetings.
- 1.5 Comparative data on Members' allowances schemes throughout Suffolk and Norfolk were also studied to help set a contextual benchmark for the North Norfolk scheme.
- 1.6 Consideration was given to the views of the Group Leaders regarding the workload, ward duties, meeting attendance and any additional duties of their members.
- 1.7 A survey of members was undertaken at the Panel's request. This covered casework, committee commitments, parish council engagements and contact with constituents.

2. Terms of Reference

The Regulations provide that the IRP can make recommendations to the Council on the following matters:

- i. The amount of basic allowance which should be payable equally to each elected Member.
- ii. The roles and responsibilities for which a special responsibility allowance should be payable and the amount of each such allowance.
- iii. Travelling and subsistence.
- iv. Co-optees' allowance.
- v. The amount in respect of expenses of arranging for the care of children and dependents and the means by which it is determined.
- vi. Backdating of allowances to the beginning of a financial year in which the scheme is amended.
- vii. Annual adjustments of allowances.

3. Proposals and Options

The issues under consideration and the Panel's recommendations were as follows:-

3.1 Basic Allowance

- 3.1.1 The current scheme provides for a payment of a basic allowance. This was set at £5,000 pa in 2016, following a period of several years when it had not been increased and which resulted in a significant increase to bring North Norfolk into line with other authorities. It had then risen to £5,254 (in line with officer annual pay awards) by December 2020. The previous panel proposed that it was increased to £5,750 (incorporating £180 broadband allowance into this) in December 2020 but this was **not** supported by members. The basic allowance is currently at £6,134 (as at November 2023) following increases in line with staff pay awards.
- 3.1.2 The Basic Allowance is intended to reflect time commitment for all councillors for their ward work, meetings with officers and attendance at committee meetings, outside bodies and parish and town councils.
- 3.1.3 Members were asked to submit comments and evidence for consideration by the Panel. Two of the Group Leaders met with the Panel.
- 3.1.4 At the request of the Panel, a survey was sent out to all members. Twenty one members responded and several submitted additional comments. The Panel noted that for many members the workload was quite heavy, often over 20 hours a week. It was also noted that the increased use of social media meant that constituents interacted with their councillors in a different way, often contacting them out of hours and expecting a quick response.
- 3.1.5 After receiving evidence in respect of both committee and ward roles and reviewing comparative schemes across Norfolk and Suffolk, the Panel felt that it was appropriate to suggest a further small increase. This would reflect the additional work that many councillors were undertaking as well as ensuring that North Norfolk was placed at a similar level to neighbouring local authorities.
- 3.1.6 It was noted that following the rejection of the proposed increase in 2020, North Norfolk had fallen behind neighbouring councils. The Panel therefore agreed to apply the increase that was proposed in 2020 for the basic allowance to this year's review. The following calculation was used:

The current basic allowance of £6134 divided by £5434 (the allowance in 2020) multiplied by the proposed increase (as recommended in 2020) of £5750. This resulted in an allowance of £6491 or £357 which was an increase of 5.8%.

If agreed, this would mean an annual overall increase in the budget for the basic allowance from £245,360 to £259,640.

Recommendation

- a) To recommend that the broadband allowance of £180 pa should continue to be incorporated into the basic allowance.

- b) To recommend that the basic allowance be increased to a total of £6491.00 pa
- c) To recommend that the Scheme should remain index linked to officers' pay awards

3.2 Special Responsibility Allowances

Please note that all of the figures set out below are based on the proposed increased basic allowance of £6,491

3.2.1 Special responsibility allowances (SRAs) are calculated as a multiplier of the basic allowance. The Panel considered this to be an appropriate way to calculate SRAs and concluded that it should continue.

3.2.2 SRAs can be paid to those members of the Council who have significant additional responsibilities over and above the generally accepted duties of a councillor.

3.2.3 The Panel considered the full range of responsibilities that could attract the payment of an SRA under executive arrangements.

3.2.4 Leader of the Council

The Panel noted the role of the Leader and the importance of the role. The Panel considered that due to the proposed increase in the basic allowance the SRA would increase accordingly and agreed to maintain the current SRA of x2 the basic allowance.

Recommendation:

To recommend that the SRA for the Leader of the Council should remain calculated by way of a multiplier of x2 the basic allowance, resulting in a special responsibility allowance of £12,982 (total allowance - £19,473)

3.2.5 Deputy Leader of the Council

The Panel noted that North Norfolk was unusual in that it did not pay a separate SRA to the Deputy Leader of the Council, they received the same as other Cabinet members. The Panel felt that the additional responsibility of covering for the Leader in their absence should be recompensed. They proposed that a multiplier of x1.6 of the basic allowance was applied, resulting in a special responsibility allowance of £10,385 (total allowance - £16,876.60)

Recommendation:

To recommend that a new SRA should be introduced for the Deputy Leader at a multiplier of x1.6 of the basic allowance, resulting in a special responsibility allowance of £10,385 (total allowance - £16,876.60)

3.2.6 Cabinet Members with Portfolio

Cabinet members currently receive a special responsibility allowance of £8,158.22 – based on a multiplier of x1.33 of the basic allowance. The Panel had regard to the roles and responsibilities of Cabinet Members and was satisfied that the multiplier should remain unchanged, as the SRA would rise due to an increase in the basic allowance. If the basic allowance increased, as proposed, Cabinet members would receive an SRA of £8,633.03 (total £14,929.30)

Recommendation:

To recommend that the SRA for Cabinet Members with Portfolio and the Deputy Leader should remain calculated by way of a multiplier of x1.33 the basic allowance, resulting in a special responsibility allowance of SRA of £8,633.03 (total £14,929.30)

3.2.7 Chairmanship of Committees and Working Parties

Currently, these Members receive a special responsibility allowance of £4,109 which is calculated on a multiplier of x0.67. The Panel considered that the commitment required to chair the Council's main committees was considerable. They acknowledged that although the Governance, Risk and Audit Committee met less frequently than other committees, the time commitment required by the Chairman for meeting preparation and undergoing development and training was high. The Panel acknowledged that the Chairman of Development Committee continued to have a heavier workload than other chairmen due to the meeting schedule which included pre-meetings and as well additional committee meetings. The length of the meetings together with the amount of time that the Chairman spent on reading documents and liaising with planning officers also contributed. It was therefore agreed that the multiplier for this committee should remain slightly higher than that of other Chairmen at x0.75, with the Vice-Chairman of Development Committee continuing to receive a multiplier of x0.25. The Panel felt that although the multipliers remained the same as before, those involved would receive a slight increase due to the rise in the Basic Allowance.

3.2.8 The Panel considered the SRA payment for the Chairman of Licensing Committee. It was noted that the main committee had met very infrequently in the past two years and they felt that the Chairman of this committee should receive a per meeting payment rather than an SRA. This would bring it in line with Standards Committee which also met infrequently. If the number of meetings increased, then payments to the Chairman would also rise as they were paid according to the number of meetings.

Recommendations:

- a) That the SRA for the Chairmanship of the Committees of the Council (with the exception of Standards Committee and Licensing Committee – see below) should remain calculated by way of a multiplier of x0.67 the basic allowance, resulting in a special responsibility allowance of £4,348.97 (total allowance - £10,839.97)
- b) That the Chairman of Development Committee should continue to receive x0.75 of the basic allowance, resulting in a special responsibility allowance of £4,868.25 (total allowance - £11,359.25)

- c) That the Vice-chairman of Development Committee should continue to receive x0.25 of the basic allowance, resulting in a special responsibility allowance of £1,622.75 (total allowance - £8,113.75)

3.2.9 Standards Committee & Licensing Committee

These committees have met infrequently over recent years and the Panel felt that the special responsibility allowance should be removed. It was considered that it would be more appropriate for the Chairmen to receive a payment per meeting. The Panel did note that was unusual for the main Licensing Committee(s) to meet so infrequently and commented that this was not the case at other local authorities. It was suggested that the reasons for the lack of meetings should be reviewed and the committee's workload should be monitored going forward.

Recommendation

To remove the SRA for the Chairmanship of the Standards Committee and Licensing Committee and instead make a payment on a per meeting basis at 2% of the basic allowance (£129.82 per meeting)

3.2.10 Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party

The Panel agreed that Working Parties could require considerable commitment from the Chairman. However, it was acknowledged that they were not decision-making bodies and the meeting schedules could be erratic. The Panel also noted that members did not support an SRA for chairmen of working parties when it was proposed in 2020. However, in response to the survey, several comments were made that the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party had a particularly heavy workload and meeting schedule and that the chairman of this working party should be considered for an SRA. The Democratic Services Manager had also advised the Panel that this particular working party operated more like a committee. Its meetings were held in person and the public could attend.

That said, the workload for this Working Party was linked to the Local Plan, which was nearing completion and it was likely that the frequency of meetings would reduce in the coming months.

Taking all of the above into consideration, the Panel recommended that the Chairman of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party should receive a payment per meeting of £129.82

Recommendation:

- a) That the chairman of the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party should receive a payment per meeting of £129.82

3.2.11 Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Council

The Chairman of the Council currently receives an SRA payment of £3,067 pa, which is calculated by way of a multiplier of x0.5. The Panel considered that this reflected the significance of the ambassadorial role of the Chairman

in the North Norfolk Community and the requirement to chair meetings of Full Council on a regular basis. It was agreed that the SRA should be retained at x0.5 the basic allowance.

3.2.12 The Panel then considered the role of the Vice-Chairman and agreed that because the Vice-Chairman may be required to stand in for the Chairman at civic events and support them in their role, the current SRA payment of x0.25 should continue, resulting in a payment of £1,533.50 pa.

Recommendations:

- a) To recommend that the SRA for the Chairman of the Council should continue to be calculated by way of a multiplier of x0.5 the basic allowance, resulting in a special responsibility allowance of £2,875 (total allowance - £8,625)
- b) That the Vice-Chairman of the Council should receive an SRA payment of x0.25 the basic allowance resulting in a special responsibility allowance of £1,437.50 (total allowance - £7,187.50)

3.2.13 Leaders of the Opposition groups

The Panel considered the role of the leaders of the opposition groups. At the last review, it was proposed and agreed that SRAs should be paid to these group leaders based on the number of members within their group. In 2020, the opposition groups had been of similar size and this seemed a fairer approach. The situation had since changed and the main opposition group was now considerably larger than the smaller opposition group. The Panel felt that it would be therefore be appropriate to propose a set SRA for each group leader, reflecting the varying workloads accordingly.

Recommendations

- a) To recommend that the SRA for the leader of the main opposition group should be calculated by way of a multiplier of x0.4 of the basic allowance, resulting in an SRA payment of £2,596.40 (total payment of £9,087.40)
- b) To recommend that the SRA for leader of the smaller opposition group should be calculated by way of a multiplier of x0.15 of the basic allowance, resulting in an SRA payment of £973.65 (total payment of £7464.65)

3.2.14 Co-opted members

The Council does not currently have any co-opted members on its committees. However, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee has previously co-opted people onto a Task & Finish Group. At present, co-opted members can claim for reasonable travelling and subsistence expenses and receive a payment per meeting. It was agreed that this payment should be continued.

Recommendation

That a payment of 2% of the basic allowance per meeting attended should be made to co-opted members of committees (£129.82 per meeting attended).

3.1.15 Member Champions

This was a new role and the Panel considered whether an SRA should be payable. As it was not clear what the role entailed and how much time was required to fulfil it, the Panel did not feel that they could recommend an SRA at this time. They did agree that travel expenses and subsistence should be claimed for any duties linked to the role and to support this, a role description should be produced and made available in the Council's constitution and on the website.

Recommendations

- a) Travel and subsistence can be claimed for duties linked to the role of member champion.
- b) A role description should be produced and be included in the Council's constitution and published on the website.

3.3 Other Payments

3.3.1 Carers' Allowance

The Panel considered the different caring roles and the comments made in response to the survey. They agreed that there should be flexibility regarding payments to ensure that no-one was disadvantaged. As in the previous review in 2020, it was acknowledged that sometimes specialist care required two carers to be in attendance and as proposed in 2020, the Panel agreed that in such instances a payment of £20 per hour, per carer should continue to be made, noting that there was no evidence to suggest an increase was justified, with rates at neighbouring authorities being on a similar level.

3.3.2 In addition, the Panel felt that members would benefit from having access to family members or neighbours to provide care, particularly for cases where children may have special needs or an elderly relative was suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's. It was acknowledged that being able to access the support of someone known to the family could be beneficial in these circumstances.

3.3.3 The Panel agreed that when utilising a friend or neighbour to provide the care, the rate should be limited to £10 or less and should be supported by a personal invoice with the carer's details and signed by the Councillor. The Panel also noted that it may be necessary to have care in place when attending virtual meetings and to ensure that members can concentrate and perform their duties to the best of their abilities. The Panel recommended that the Carer's Allowance is paid for babysitters and carers during all council meetings, including virtual meetings.

Recommendations

- a) To recommend that the carers' allowance should be maintained at the current rates:
£10 per hour for child-care
£20 per hour, per carer for specialist care (up to two carers per session)

- b) To recommend that the payment of a childcare or Carer's Allowance should only be paid on provision of a receipt;
- c) To allow a simple invoice system to allow friends/relatives and similar to provide care and babysitting.
- d) That childcare or Carer's Allowance be paid for a Councillor either physically attending a Council meeting or a virtual meeting to allow Councillors to concentrate only on the duties they had been elected to do.
- e) To recommend that in unusual or extenuating circumstances, the Democratic Services Manager will consider payments for care on a case by case basis.

3.4 Travelling

The current mileage scheme is based upon nationally set rates (HMRC) and supported by guidance from the AA. This sets out that mileage is payable in respect of meetings and attendance in relation to rightful responsibilities or representation of views, for example, meetings of the Council, site visits, outside organisations etc. The Panel could see no justification for moving away from these arrangements. However, it was brought to the Panel's attention that during a period of very high fuel costs, the Council had agreed to raise mileage rates for staff on a temporary basis. This meant that members were out of sync with payments to officers. It was agreed that in future, any such temporary increases should also apply to members.

The current scheme states that members are encouraged to use public transport where practicable and that costs associated with public transport are reclaimable at standard rates wherever possible. The Panel acknowledged that public transport was not always an option in rural areas but that it should be used where possible.

The Panel reiterated their support for members claiming for travel to attend parish and town council meetings. They suggested that this should be actively promoted so that members were aware that this was something that they could claim for, particularly those members representing rural wards with several parishes.

Recommendations

- a) To recommend that the existing travelling expenses scheme should be maintained, and that it should be subject to amendment in accordance with prevailing national agreements:

Mileage

Car (regardless of engine size)	45 pence per mile
Motorcycle	24 pence per mile
Cycle	20 pence per mile
Car Share	5 pence per mile

- b) That if staff mileage rates are increased on a temporary basis, for any reason, the same rates should also be applied to members.

3.5 Subsistence payments

The Panel agreed that the current payments for subsistence were reasonable and should be retained. They highlighted that payments for breakfast should only be payable if the Member was staying away overnight. They compared the subsistence rates paid at neighbouring councils and noted that North Norfolk's were at the higher end. For this reason, it was agreed that they should not be increased at the current time.

The Panel reiterated that all claims should be accompanied by receipts and that they should be submitted within 3 months. All bookings for hotels should be done through the Council except in exceptional circumstances.

Recommendation:

To retain the payments for subsistence at the following levels:

- £6.88 for breakfast (only where an overnight stay is required)
- £8.00 for lunch
- £20.00 for dinner

3.6 Additional requests

The Panel had received a request from a member to consider allowing members access to some staff schemes' such as the Cycle to Work scheme. HR provided the following advice on this:

'The scheme allows employees to benefit from the long term loan of a bike and associated commuting equipment tax free. In order to qualify for the scheme, the main purpose of hiring the bike and equipment must be for commuting between your home and workplace in connection with your employment. As it is processed as a monthly payroll deduction from a staff member's salary, and they do need a minimum salary to be eligible, this is why it isn't open to Members. Effectively, we pay the whole amount up front to Cyclescheme and then claim it back in monthly instalments over 12 months through the payroll.'

The Panel therefore felt that they could not support this request.

3.7 Backdating of Allowances

The Panel could see no justification for suggesting that allowances should be backdated to the beginning of the financial year in which the scheme is to be amended. It was noted that members' allowances had recently been backdated to April 2023, to reflect the staff pay award.

Recommendation

To recommend that the changes proposed by the Panel are not backdated but should take effect from the beginning of the municipal year, in May 2024.

3.8 Renunciation of Allowances

The Panel strongly agreed that all Members should receive their allowance and that renunciation should be discouraged as it was felt that this could discriminate between those who could afford to forgo their allowance and those who could not.

Recommendation

To recommend that all Members should receive their allowance in recognition of the commitment required and that the forgoing of allowances should be discouraged.

3.9 Future Reviews

The Panel had received a request from a Town Council to consider setting allowances for town and parish councillors. The responsibility for this sits with the second-tier authority's IRP. This was a substantial piece of work and would commence in the new year.

4 Financial and Resource Implications

There are financial implications relating to this report. An increase in the basic allowance will have an impact on the overall budget, however, failure to implement incremental increases on a four-year basis can lead to a much larger increase at a later date to bring the Council in line with neighbouring authorities - as happened in 2016.

If the increase in the basic allowance is agreed, the annual budget for Members' allowances will increase from £351,820 to £369,411 in 2024/2025. The members' allowances budget for 2023/24 is forecast to be underspent.

Comments from the S151 Officer:

The S151 Officer (or member of the Finance team on their behalf) will complete this section.

Members should continue to accept an annual increase to cover costs of inflation and this can be incorporated into the Members' Allowances Budget.

5 Legal Implications

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer (or member of the Legal team on behalf of the MO) will complete this section. They will outline any legal advice provided.

The Council has complied with the statutory requirements to have an independent review within the relevant timeframe of members allowances, enabling it to take such information into account before making or amending members' allowances.

6 Risks

The main risk associated with the review of the Members' Scheme of Allowances is reputational in nature. When considering the findings and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, Members should evaluate them in the spirit intended and the context of the prevailing circumstances. When making their decision however, the Panel would like to draw the Council's attention to the payments made to members in neighbouring authorities and the increased workload (as highlighted in the survey results).

There is a risk that if the allowances are not increased then people will be deterred from standing as candidates. The survey results indicated that some members already feel that the allowance is too low and for those with no additional income, the cost of living crisis has impacted significantly

There is a risk that if the basic allowance is not increased on a 4-year basis that NNDC will start to lag behind other authorities and a much larger increase will have to occur at some point.

However, while Members are required to have due regard to the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, it is still a matter for the Council to decide whether it adopts the associated recommendations in full or part.

7 Net Zero Target

N/A

8 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

A low basic allowance can deter people from standing as a councillor. The Panel feels that an increase in the allowance may encourage more people to stand. They also believe that the additional option of care from a family member provides more flexibility and support to assist in fulfilling the role.

9 Community Safety issues

N/A

10 Conclusion and Recommendations

The Independent Remuneration Panel have met on several occasions. The following were all part of the review process:

- Consideration of comparative data from neighbouring authorities
- Survey of members undertaken – looking at ward work, committee workload, contact from constituents, parish & town council commitments etc
- Meetings with two of the group leaders
- Consideration of comments from members submitted to the Panel.
- The impact on candidates considering standing for election and ensuring that the basic allowance reflected the workload. The Panel did not want the allowance to slip behind neighbouring authorities and deter people from putting themselves forward. Proposed changes to the carer's allowance also supported this approach by providing more flexibility around the use of family and friends.

After taking all of the above into consideration, the Panel felt that a small increase in the basic allowance should be recommended. This would bring NNDC in line with neighbouring authorities and would also reflect the increase in workload for many councillors. It was acknowledged that councillors were impacted by the cost of living crisis, particularly those on limited incomes.

The Independent Remuneration Panel therefore makes the following recommendations to Full Council:

Recommendations:

That Members consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, adopt a scheme of allowances and amend the Constitution accordingly. Specifically, it is recommended that:

- a) the Basic Allowance should increase to £6,491 pa (to include £180 Broadband Allowance).
- b) the Scheme should remain index linked to officers' pay awards.
- c) the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Leader of the Council should remain calculated by way of a multiplier of x2 the basic allowance.
- d) A new SRA for the Deputy Leader should be introduced, calculated by way of a multiplier of x1.6 the basic allowance.
- e) the SRA for Cabinet Members with Portfolio should remain calculated by way of a multiplier of x1.33 the basic allowance.
- f) the SRA for Chairmen of Committees of the Council (except Development Committee, Licensing Committee and Standards Committee) should remain calculated by way of a multiplier of x0.67 the basic allowance.
- g) the SRA for the Chairman of Development Committee to remain at x0.75 of the basic allowance, with the SRA for the Vice-chairman of Development Committee remaining at x0.25 of the basic allowance.
- h) Payments for the Chairmen of Standards Committee and Licensing Committee should be based on a per meeting payment of 2% of the Basic Allowance or £129.82.
- i) A new payment for Chairmen of Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party to be introduced on a per meeting basis of 2% of the basic allowance, or £129.82.
- j) SRA payments to leaders of the opposition groups should move to a flat SRA rather than being based on the number within the group.
- k) The SRA for the Leader of the main opposition group should be calculated by a way of a multiplier of x0.4.
- l) The SRA for the Leader of the smaller opposition group should be calculated by means of a multiplier of x0.15.
- m) The SRA for the Chairman of the Council should remain the same and be calculated by means of a multiplier of x0.5, with the Vice-Chairman of the Council remaining on the multiplier of x0.25.
- n) Member champion roles should not receive an SRA but should be eligible for travel and subsistence payments.

- o) A role description should be produced for member champions and should be published on the Council's website.
- p) A new 'family and friends' rate for carer's allowance of up to £10 per hour should be introduced, to support councillors in their role and ensure no-one is disadvantaged by caring responsibilities.
- q) The Democratic Services Manager to have delegation to consider payments for carers' allowance on a case by case basis, allowing a higher rate in exceptional circumstances.
- r) Travel and subsistence rates to remain the same and will continue to include travel to attend parish and town council meetings.
- s) Any temporary increases to staff mileage rates will also apply to members.