

**MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL
INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

**REPORT ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES
1 APRIL 2023 - 31 MARCH 2024**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require the Council to have regard to the recommendations of an independent panel in agreeing allowances paid to councillors.
- 1.2 The Independent Panel operates under the provisions of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (Regulations) 2003. These regulations require that all councils set up independent panels and take account of their advice before agreeing their councillors' allowances scheme.

2. MEMBERSHIP

- 2.1 Mid Devon District Council's Independent Remuneration Panel ("the IRP") consists of Jeremy Filmer-Bennett, Marianne Hulland and Karen Stone (Panel Chair) all of whom have considerable experience of undertaking reviews for the Council on the matter of Member Allowances.

3. REVIEW CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The IRP met on the 1 November 2022 and were supported by the District Solicitor and Monitoring officer and a Member Services Officer.
- 3.2 This report sets out the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the IRP concerning Member Allowances for April 2023 to March 2024 which convened in November 2022.
- 3.3 In advance of the meeting the Panel received a range of information which it has considered as part of its review including:
 - The South West Councils' survey detailing the allowances paid to councillors in similar local authorities across the South West;
 - The previous IRP report;
 - The current Scheme of Members' Allowances;

- Feedback from Members;
 - The LGA approved Pay rise of £1,925 for staff and the % equivalent range for each spinal column point (SCP).
- 3.4 A summary of the general introductory conversation was that a full fundamental review was due to have taken place this year. However this had not been carried out as planned due to a lack of resources within the Council. The Panel noted that Mid Devon District Council ('the Council') will carry out a full fundamental review after the election next year. It was agreed that after the elections the Council will know more about available government funding, what local government is facing in the future and what resources will be available, and this will also enable the Council to carry out exit interviews with outgoing Councillors, and obtain the views of the new incoming Councillors.
- 3.5 The Panel recognises the effect of the cost of living and discussed impacts on the Council as a rural district. It was acknowledged that Members now attend the meetings in-person but can also attend remotely via Zoom as the Council hosts hybrid meetings. However, if they are a member of the committee they must be present in the room to be able to vote.
- 3.6 In response to the Member consultation on the current allowances scheme, four Members responded and only two of these provided comments. Noting the limited response from the 42 councillors consulted, the Panel recognised it was difficult for councillors to advocate changes to allowances, which would benefit them. The Panel also discussed the fact that allowances were responsibility linked and Members views were vital to enable the Panel's better understanding of Members' roles. The Panel also discussed external influences and the effect of social media. The IRP conveys it thanks to those that responded to the recent consultation.

4. SOUTH WEST COUNCILS SURVEY 2022

- 4.1 The Panel considered the benchmarked data and continued to be of the opinion that the current allowances at Mid Devon District Council appeared to be in line with other similar authorities and were still 'reasonable' within that context.

5. MDDC SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES FOR 2023-2024

- 5.1 Taking account of the all the information provided, the IRP considers the various elements of the current Scheme of Allowances in this section of the report.
- 5.2 The proposed pay scales by the LGA had been agreed that day as two of the three unions had agreed to the Employers' offer. This was not a straightforward % as it had been in the past, but rather a payment of £1,925 increase across the board for each spinal column point. Part of

the pay agreement was also that all allowances would go up by 4.04% with effect from 1 April 2022. This payment is therefore retrospective.

Basic Allowance

- 5.3 The IRP took into account the agreed pay agreement from today and they agreed that £1,925 was too high as the basic allowance as this is in effect over a 35% increase. It was then discussed what the increase should be applied to the allowances.
- 5.4 This year’s recommended change to allowances will maintain a link with the provisions of the staff award, which included an increase of 4.04% for allowances.
- 5.5 In doing so the Panel agreed that the % increase applied would be based on the 4.04% in line with the allowances part of the pay agreement for payments retrospectively from 22/23. It has increased from £5402.70 to £5620.96 p.a.
- 5.6 However the Panel noted that other IRP’s were undertaking further work on the appropriateness of attaching the basic allowance to a particular SCP and suggested that they would carry out more research for 23/24 to consider during the fundamental review.

Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)

- 5.7 The Regulations provide that SRA may be paid to those Members of the Council who have “significant additional responsibilities” over and above the generally accepted duties of a Councillor. In setting the SRAs, the Panel has in the past concluded that the best approach was to use the Basic Allowance as the starting point and then give a weighting to the role attracting the SRA which could be applied to the Basic Allowance. This is an approach applied by many authorities. The Panel remains of the view that the link between the Basic Allowance and SRA is an important one.
- 5.8 The Panel agreed that they wished to leave the SRA until the full fundamental review is carried out. For the avoidance of doubt the SRA will go up retrospectively based on the 4.04% increase on the basic allowance and the SRA multipliers remain, but the amounts payable be rounded up / down to the nearest pound.
- 5.9 The IRP does not consider any changes to the multipliers for SRAs is needed but given the amounts which result, suggest that the amounts payable on applying the relevant multiplier be rounded up / down to the nearest pound. As such the following levels of SRA’s until 31 March 2023 should apply (see fourth column):

Position	Weighting x Basic	SRA (based	SRA to be included in
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	Allowance (BA)	upon BA of £5620.96)	the Scheme
Leader of the Council	3.00	£16862.88	£16863
Deputy Leader	1.50	£8431.44	£8431
Cabinet Member	1.25	£7026.20	£7026
Scrutiny Committee Chair	1.25	£7026.20	£7026
PDG Chair	0.75	£4215.72	£4216
Audit Committee Chair	0.75	£4215.72	£4216
Planning Committee Chair	1.25	£7026.20	£7026
Licensing/Regulatory Chair	0.25	£1405.24	£1405
Standards Chair	0.25	£1405.24	£1405
Chairman of the Council	0.50	£2810.48	£2810

- 5.10 For the avoidance of doubt, the Panel continues to take the view that Members should only be entitled to claim one SRA.

Carer's Allowance

- 5.11 The IRP considers the current Carer's Allowance within the Scheme is still fit for purpose and shall remain the same.

Travel and Subsistence Allowances

- 5.12 The Panel therefore continues to recommend that reimbursement of approved mileage remain at the current rates published by HMRC which for 2023/2024 are):

- 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles
- 25p per mile thereafter
- 5p per mile per passenger carried (up to a maximum of 4 passengers, payable to the driver)
- 20p per mile for push bikes
- 24p per mile for motorcycles

(All claims to be submitted with receipts)

- 5.13 The Panel does not consider any changes to the current arrangements are needed and as such subsistence allowances should remain consistent with those for employees which are amended in line with the HMRC rates which are:

- One meal (5 hour) ceiling Upper limit £5
- Two meal (10 hour) ceiling Upper limit £10
- Three meal (12 hour) ceiling Upper limit £15
- 24 hour ceiling Upper limit £20

(All claims to be submitted with receipts)

Summary of Recommendations:

The Independent Remuneration Panel recommends to Full Council the following:

- a. That the 22/23 Basic Allowance is retrospectively made at 4.04% increasing it from £5402.70 to £5620.96.
- b. That a full fundamental review is carried out in relation to 23/24 after the May elections.
- c. That the Member's Allowances Scheme as set out in Appendix 2 is approved which takes into account the retrospective staff linked pay increase at 4.04%.

Independent Remuneration Panel

Jeremy Filmer-Bennett
Marianne Hlland
Karen Stone

1 November 2022