

**MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**  
**Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel**  
**to Oxfordshire County Council, May 2020**

**Issues for decision**

1. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the time when the Independent Remuneration Panel would have met to consider a full review of the Members Allowances Scheme; the last full review having been concluded in November 2014.
2. Due to the pandemic, no Council meetings could be held physically, and legislation did not exist to enable such meetings to happen virtually, and officers and councillors found themselves immediately diverted onto tasks directed to addressing the COVID-19 situation. This meant it was not possible to achieve a fully-agreed Scheme in the normal course of events.

**Principles Adopted**

3. The Panel recognised the need to adopt a Scheme, now that the Council are legally able to meet, thus ensuring that the Council meets the stipulations of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003,
4. The Panel were mindful of the pressures brought to bear on the Council due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the extraordinary circumstances prevailing.
5. Given the current restrictions on meeting, the Panel agreed to give its view via email, in order to achieve a Scheme of Allowances for 2020/21.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

6. **The Panel RECOMMENDS that:**
  - a) **the Council's existing Scheme of Allowances be adopted unaltered for 2020/2021 so as to maintain the status quo,**
  - b) **the uplift for allowances for 2020/21 should be at the same rate as the annually agreed pay award for staff; and**
  - c) **the Panel should conduct a full review as soon as possible later in the year, either remotely or by physical presence, and ideally before 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020.**

**David Shelmerdine**  
**Martyn Hocking**  
**Katherine Powley**

**Independent Remuneration Panel**

## Background – the Panel and its role

### Introduction

1. The Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require local authorities to review their Allowances Schemes and to appoint Independent Remuneration Panels to consider and make recommendations on new schemes. The Government's "Guidance on Consolidated Regulations on Local Authority Allowances" outlines the main statutory provisions and gives non-statutory guidance. In brief, the Regulations say that the following issues are to be addressed by the Panel:
  - Basic Allowance: each local authority must make provision for a basic, flat rate allowance payable to all members. The allowance must be the same for each councillor; it can be paid either in a lump sum or in instalments.
  - Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA): each local authority may make provision for the payment of SRAs for those councillors who have significant responsibilities. The Panel has to recommend the responsibilities that should be remunerated and the levels of the allowances.
  - Co-optees' allowance: each local authority may make provision for the payment of an allowance to co-optees' for attending meetings, conferences and seminars.
  - Childcare and dependent carers' allowance: local authorities may make provision for the payment of an allowance to those councillors who incur expenditure for the care of children or dependent relatives whilst undertaking particular duties.
  - Travel and subsistence: each local authority may determine the levels of travel and subsistence allowances and the duties to which they should apply.
  - Indexation: each local authority may determine that allowances should be increased in accordance with a specified index and can identify the index and set the number of years (not exceeding four) for which it should apply.
  - Backdating: each local authority may determine that, where amendments are made to an allowances scheme, the allowances as amended may be backdated.

### The Independent Remuneration Panel

2. The Independent Remuneration Panel for Oxfordshire County Council is:-
  - David Shelmerdine
  - Martyn Hocking
  - Katherine Powley

## **Background – The Panel and it's Role**

3. The Panel last met in January 2019, reporting to the Full Council in April 2019 on certain limited changes to the 2019/20 scheme. A further, fuller review had been scheduled for the Autumn of 2019. However, this coincided with the need to recruit further members to the Panel, following two resignations, and the occurrence of a Parliamentary Election. Once these matters were concluded, the COVID restrictions had occurred. Therefore, a fuller review therefore remains to be achieved, hence the Panel's recommendation in 6(c) above.