



INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL BRIEFING PACK

Review: 4th March 2022

January 2022

1. BACKGROUND AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

- 1.1. North Northamptonshire Council began providing services to the residents and businesses of North Northamptonshire on 1st April 2021. North Northamptonshire Council is responsible for the former duties, responsibilities, assets and liabilities of the former Borough Council of Wellingborough, Corby Borough Council, East Northamptonshire Council, Kettering Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council (disaggregated). The new unitary authority provides more efficient service delivery with considerable opportunities to develop and transform services to improve outcomes and increase value for money.
- 1.2. Allowances for councillors must be determined by councils after consideration of recommendations by an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), which must operate in accordance with a framework set out in legislation.
- 1.3. IRPs consider and recommend fair schemes of remuneration for councillors which take into account their statutory responsibilities and the roles councillors are required to fulfil as an elected member of the council. IRPs also have an important role in highlighting how barriers to people becoming councillors can be removed.
- 1.4. The membership of the IRP for North Northamptonshire is:
 - Professor Steve Leach – Emeritus Professor of Local Government at De Montfort University and an experienced chair of IRPs.
 - Ms Sue Watts Business Development Director of Age UK, a representative of the voluntary sector and experienced IRP member.
 - Gerard Dempsey JP – a background in financial management, a lay member of the Lord Chancellor’s Advisory Committee and experienced IRP member.
- 1.5. On 5th February 2021, the IRP conducted a review to consider the role of members of North Northamptonshire Council and subsequently made recommendations on a scheme of members’ allowances. A scheme for North Northamptonshire Council was then adopted by the Shadow Council at a meeting held on 25th February 2021.

North Northamptonshire Council

- 1.6. North Northamptonshire Council comprises 78 Members, elected across 26 wards.

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- 1.7. Elections to North Northamptonshire Council took place on 6th May 2021.
- 1.8. A Children's Trust has been created that acts on behalf of the two new unitary councils in Northamptonshire. The Children's Trust undertakes the majority of duties and responsibilities formerly undertaken by Northamptonshire County Council in this service area but the Council retains an Intelligent Client Function to ensure that it meets its statutory duties.
- 1.9. North Northamptonshire Council is a direct provider of social housing, the housing stocks from the former Kettering Borough Council and Corby Borough Council having been transferred to the Council.
- 1.10. The Council has adopted a Constitution based upon what is often referred to as a "hybrid model of governance". It is still legally a Leader and Cabinet governance model. However, cross-party Executive Advisory Panels, led by a relevant Executive member, provide support on policy development and make recommendations to the Executive before they make decisions. This allows more inclusive member decision-making.

Terms of Reference for the IRP

- 1.11. The scheme of members' allowances for North Northamptonshire Council took effect from 1st April 2021. **Appendix A** provides an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Shadow Authority held on 25th February 2021 for information.
- 1.12. Item 12 of the resolution refers to the need to carry out a review of members' allowances after one year, when experience of operating the new decision-making structure would have accumulated. The Independent Remuneration Panel will meet on 4th March 2022 to review its original recommendations and consider representations that have been made by members of the Council, senior officers and the Council's Independent Persons.
- 1.13. The 2022 review of members' allowances is to be conducted in accordance with the timeline set out on Page 6-7 of this Briefing Report.
- 1.14. The current scheme of members' allowances is attached as **Appendix B**.
- 1.15. The IRP is requested to review the level and application of the following allowances, and make recommendations for any changes that it considers necessary following the review, taking account of: -
 - (a) quantitative data relating the operation of the governance structure from 26th May 2021 to 31st December 2021 (See **Appendix C**)
 - (b) qualitative information received from representations received

(c) the Council's Corporate Plan, which was adopted by Council on 1st December 2021 (See **Appendix D**)

- a basic allowance for 78 unitary councillors
- special responsibility allowances for the Leader, Deputy Leader and Executive Members
- allowances for the leaders of recognised political groups
- special responsibility allowances for the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees
- an allowance and the application of travel and subsistence allowances for the Independent Person(s) and Co-opted Members.
- appropriate civic allowances for the Chair and Deputy Chair of the council
- childcare and dependants' carer's allowances

1.16. Roles and Responsibilities

- 1.16.1 All elected members of North Northamptonshire Council are expected to fulfil certain responsibilities on behalf of the public and the constituents within their respective wards. They are expected to represent their local communities and contribute to the decision-making process of the Council as defined in the Constitution. Members are expected to develop links with local partners and stakeholders, including representing the Council on outside bodies where appointed. Members, working with officers, will ensure that appropriate policies and strategies are implemented and Council resources are utilised in an efficient and effective manner in support of said policies and strategies. All Members are obliged to adhere to any codes of conduct and other approved policies or protocols in undertaking their duties and responsibilities. In addition, Members are expected to attend training and/or briefings associated with their role(s), particularly where they are expected to undertake decision-making responsibilities e.g., planning, licensing etc.
- 1.16.2 Full Council comprises all 78 of the elected members of North Northamptonshire Council. Full Council exercises decision making subject to statute and designated in the approved Council Constitution.
- 1.16.3 The Council operates an Executive governance model. The 78 councillors meeting in Full Council elect a Leader of the Council, who in turn appoints other members to an Executive. The Executive meets monthly to determine those matters which are required by law and/or the Council's Constitution to be determined by them. Each member of the Executive has areas of

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responsibility/interest and will liaise with appropriate officers to discuss issues/draft recommendations in relation to those specific service areas and represent the Executive on other bodies and at meetings where required.

- 1.16.4 As part of the “hybrid model of governance”, the Leader has established Executive Advisory Panels, each of which are chaired by an Executive member. These Panels are cross-party comprising of non-Executive members. They are intended to assist in informing decisions of the Executive, and their comments or observations on matters requiring an Executive decision are considered prior to the Executive determining such recommendations. The Panels have an important role in assisting in formulating policy and strategy, providing a non-Executive perspective of issues requiring determination.
- 1.16.5 The Council currently participates in two joint committees established with our colleagues in West Northamptonshire Council. These joint committees relate to Executive functions, with membership appointed by the respective Leaders of each council. Currently there are two joint committees, one relating to Shared Services and one relating to Children’s Services.
- 1.16.6 The Council has certain statutory *quasi-judicial* functions that it is required to undertake, particularly in relation to its responsibilities as the Planning Authority and the Licensing Authority for North Northamptonshire. These are non-Executive functions.
- a) In relation to its role as the Planning Authority, the Council have established four Area Planning Committees to determine minor applications for planning consent etc in the respective areas. Major applications, cross-area applications, and applications for certain other planning consents e.g., minerals, are determined by a Strategic Planning Committee.
 - b) In relation to its role as Licensing Authority, the Council has established a Licensing & Appeals Committee. The full committee rarely meets however sub-committees (panels) meet to determine issues relating to Hackney Carriage licensing, Liquor licensing, etc.
- 1.16.7 The Council has established a Democracy and Standards Committee to undertake the role of monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council’s Constitution and fulfilling the Council’s responsibilities for the monitoring of the Councillor Code of Conduct and determining any allegations received that said Code has been breached by an elected member. Certain other miscellaneous issues relating to governance and the

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political structure of the Council are also discussed and/or determined by this committee.

- 1.16.8 The Council's statutory scrutiny function is undertaken by two bodies established under the Constitution.
- a) The Scrutiny Commission has an overarching role across all service areas to ensure that the Council's agreed policies and strategies are being delivered efficiently and effectively. The Scrutiny Commission is also able to hold the Executive to account, should the Commission feel that a decision taken by the Executive may not be in the best interests of the Council and public, or has failed to take significant information into account prior to a decision being made.
 - b) The Finance & Resources Scrutiny Committee has particular responsibility for monitoring the effective use of the Council's financial resources in the delivery of services and implementation of agreed Council policies or strategies.
- 1.16.9 The Audit & Governance Committee provides assurance to the Council in relation to the governance, risk management framework and associated financial control environment. The committee undertakes non-Executive functions.
- 1.16.10 The Health & Wellbeing Board is a statutory committee that provides an opportunity for Council members and partner representatives to consider policies and strategies aimed at securing better health and wellbeing outcomes for local citizens.
- 1.16.11 The Employment Committee is a non-Executive committee, in general dealing with matters relating to the recruitment and conduct of senior officers of the Council (Chief Officers/Deputy Chief Officers).
- 1.16.12 Full Council appoints each year elected members to fulfil the respective roles of Chair and Vice-Chair of North Northamptonshire Council. These members act as the "civic representatives" of the Council. The Chair chairs meetings of Full Council and acts in an ambassadorial role, promoting the Council and acting as representative at civic occasions. The Vice-Chair deputises where appropriate.
- 1.16.13 On occasion, Full Council, the Executive, or a committee may establish a working group or task & finish group to assist in considering an issue(s) for formal determination by a parent body at a later date. Examples of this include the standing Constitutional Working Group established by the Democracy &

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Standards Committee, which reviews potential amendments to the Constitution prior to formal determination. The ad hoc Boundary Review Group assists in formulating the Council's recommended response to reviews of electoral boundaries. The Finance & Resources Scrutiny Committee establishes task & finish groups to assist in formulating the Committee's response to the Council's Budget Consultation Process. The Scrutiny Commission establishes task & finish groups in relation to specific topics, in order to assist in the formulation by the Executive and/or Full Council of future Council policies, strategies or priorities.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

- 2.1. North Northamptonshire Council requires a scheme of Members' Allowances that adequately supports Councillors and provides the best possible opportunity for any resident who is qualified to become a local councillor to stand for election and serve. Financial support for councillors must therefore reinforce the culture of a forward-looking and developing Council and address, as far as possible, any disincentives to serving as a councillor.
- 2.2. The Scheme of Members' Allowances for North Northamptonshire Council should be in accordance with all relevant legislation and the scheme should be capable of supporting any new statutory activities or duties that may be introduced.
- 2.3. The Budget for North Northamptonshire Council is due to be approved by the Council at its meeting on 23rd February 2022. The Council requests the panel to consider a scheme only against the objectives of the review. The Council will consider any affordability issues.
- 2.4. Does the Panel endorse the following basic principles of the current Scheme of Members' Allowances?
 - 2.4.1. Only one Special Responsibility Allowance should be payable to any member
 - 2.4.2. Duties qualifying for a Special Responsibility Allowance must be within one or more of the following categories:
 - (a) acting as leader or deputy leader of a political group
 - (b) being a member of the authority's Executive
 - (c) being the Chair or Vice Chair of the Council or a Committee
 - (d) representing the Council at meetings of or arranged by any other body
 - (e) membership of a committee or sub-committee which meets with exceptional frequency or for exceptionally long periods

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- (f) any other duties which require time and effort equal to, or greater than, the other examples listed

2.5. Does the Panel endorse that the basic allowance continue to be increased annually in line with other officer pay awards?

Ward Councillors - Basic Allowance

2.6 The IRP is requested to consider a basic allowance for 78 councillors. The Council comprises 26 wards in total, each electing three councillors. The wards are based on the former Northamptonshire County Council divisions. The current electorate of each ward varies in size from 8,589 electors in one ward, to 11,553 electors in another.

2.7. The average ratio of councillor/elector across North Northamptonshire (based upon January 2022 data) is 1:3349. Councillors undertake the normal duties and responsibilities associated with constituents' enquiries and complaints.

2.8. Following the creation of North Northamptonshire Council, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) indicated its intention to conduct a review of the electoral arrangements for North Northamptonshire. The Council is now undertaking work in connection with the review of electoral arrangements. The primary reason for undertaking a review is to improve electoral equality across the council's area. The outcome of the review will be implemented in time for the 2025 full council elections. The LGBCE review will look at:

- the total number of councillors elected to the local authority;
- the number and boundaries of wards for the purposes of the election of councillors;
- the number of councillors for any ward; and
- the name of any ward

2.9 The Leader has announced a member empowerment fund that can be utilized by members and will allow them to determine projects within their wards.

The Executive (Cabinet)

2.9. The Leader normally chairs meetings of the Executive. The IRP is requested to consider and recommend allowances for:

- The Leader
- The Deputy Leader
- Executive Members

2.10. The Executive currently comprises of eight members in addition to the Leader and Deputy Leader. Members of the Executive are allocated portfolios by the Leader. Portfolio holders take the lead in representing the

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Executive both internally and externally in their areas. However, Portfolio Holders are not delegated authority to make individual decisions.

- 2.11 In addition to considering and recommending a level of allowances for the Leader, Deputy Leader and Executive Members, the Panel is requested to recommend whether a future increase/decrease in the size of the Cabinet should result in an increase/decrease in the overall budget for the Cabinet or whether the increase/decrease should be shared.

Leaders of Opposition Groups

- 2.12 The IRP is requested to review allowances for the leaders of recognised political groups. A recognised political group must consist of a minimum of two councillors.

Chairs and Vice Chairs

- 2.13. The IRP is requested to review the allowances for chairs of other committees, and whether an allowance for vice-chairs should be applicable.

Civic Allowances for the Chair and Deputy Chair of North Northamptonshire Council

- 2.14 The IRP is requested to review allowances for the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Council. These are known as “civic allowances”.

- 2.15. The Chair is responsible for chairing Full Council meetings and acting as an ambassador for the Council at civic and community events.

Independent Person(s) and Co-opted Members

- 2.16. The Council is required by law to adopt a code of conduct and make arrangements under which allegations can be investigated and decisions on allegations can be made about councillors. North Northamptonshire Council currently has appointed three Independent Persons in accordance with the provisions of The Localism Act 2011. The Independent Person plays a key role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst councillors.

- 2.17. The IRP is requested to review the current allowance of £400 per meeting attended by Independent Persons and Co-opted Members.

Information Technology (IT)

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- 2.18. North Northamptonshire Council places a strong emphasis on the use of information technology by councillors and all members have been offered a device to facilitate their use of information technology in their role.

Childcare and Dependant's Carers' Allowance

- 2.19. The Council is keen to ensure that councillors who have childcare or other caring responsibilities are not disadvantaged from fully participating in council activities. The IRP is asked to review the current annual limit of £6,500 and consider whether this allowance should be increased to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Living Wage criteria.

Travel, Mileage and Subsistence Allowances

- 2.20. The IRP is requested to review the current travel, mileage and subsistence allowances relating to those councillors engaged in the authorised business of the council. Travel, Mileage and Subsistence allowances for Councillors should, as far as possible, align with allowances for staff.

3. TIMESCALE, CORONAVIRUS AND RESOURCES

- 3.1. The timescale for the review is set out below:

Steps	Dates
Letter to all Councillors; Group Leaders; Chief Executive; Director of Governance and HR & Monitoring Officer and existing Independent Persons	Week commencing 17 th January 2022
Publicity for the review on North Northamptonshire website and social media and a media release with a link to further information (this briefing pack)	by Friday, 21st January 2022
Deadline for representations/comments	Thursday, 24 th February 2022
Zoom meetings with individuals or groups of individuals will be arranged if necessary during the review period.	
IRP meets via Zoom	Friday, 4 th March 2022

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Steps	Dates
IRP's report and recommendations to be submitted	By Monday, 28 th March 2022
Statutory Notice Northants Telegraph website Notice in newspaper (published Thursdays) Council's website	As soon as possible after receipt of IRP recommendations
Democracy & Standards Committee to consider IRP's recommendations and make its own recommendations to the Council's Executive and/or full Council	Monday, 4 th April 2022
Executive to consider IRP's recommendations and make its own recommendations to full Council	Thursday, 14 th April 2022
Full Council meets to consider IRP recommendations and any recommendations made by the Executive and/or the Democracy and Standards Committee and approve a Scheme of Members' Allowances to take effect from 27 th May 2022	Thursday, 26 th May 2022

Coronavirus

- 3.2. The Panel will decide on the methods it will use for the review in accordance with health protection regulations, local restrictions, government guidance and any legislation that may be applicable as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Resources

- 3.3 Officers will provide administrative support to the Panel as required.
- 3.4 Members and officers will be available to discuss any issue with the Panel. The Council expects the Panel to make use of any relevant previous work in this area.

