

**11. SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES – REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

The circulated report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services was received in relation to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel to approve a scheme of Members' allowances for North Northamptonshire Council to take effect from 1 April 2021 until the scheme is amended or revoked by the council.

Mr Ged Dempsey, a member of the Independent Remuneration Panel, joined the meeting and presented the report, explaining how conclusions and recommendations had been reached, and that they were based on the proposed governance structure. The panel had also taken into consideration the need to encourage a more diverse selection of the community to stand for election to ensure there were no financial barriers to prevent people from standing.

The draft scheme was appended to the report and detailed the allowances that members would receive. This equated to £1,260,000 for the municipal year 2021-22.

Councillor Griffiths proposed the motion, and this was seconded by Councillor Jelley.

The chairman opened the report for debate.

**Continuation of meeting** - Before the debate commenced, Councillor Smithers proposed that as the revised guillotine time extension for the meeting (to 11.30pm) was approaching that the meeting continue for a further 20 minutes, to conclude the agenda, and in accordance with the constitution. This was seconded by Councillor Griffiths.

Members voted, using the electronic poll on the Zoom platform. There were 85 votes cast, with 70 votes in favour, 14 against and one abstention. The motion was declared carried and it was resolved that the meeting would continue until 11.50pm.

Councillors Hakewill, G Mercer, Maguire, Allebone, Maxwell, Simmons, Howes, McGhee, Aslam, Jelley and Smithers all spoke. Many supported the recommendations contained within the report and considered them to be fair and appropriate. Other councillors shared various concerns including the difference in the allowances proposed for councillors in the West to that in the North; the lack of IT allowance, and the cost of broadband which members considered was essential to conduct their role. Comments were also made about the best way in which to attract younger councillors and how to encourage diversity so that councillors could stand for election from all walks of

life, including those with disabilities. Councillors commented that under the current scheme those with disabilities would often be prevented from standing as the allowance would affect any benefits they were in receipt of.

Councillor Simmons proposed an amendment to the scheme to enable an IT allowance to be paid and to reduce the general allowance, this would have the effect of reducing the income tax paid to HMRC and enable VAT to be recovered by the council, also from HMRC. Councillor Aslam seconded this proposal. On debating the proposal Councillor Aslam withdrew as seconder. Another seconder was not found, and the amendment fell and was not debated.

Mr Dempsey responded to some of the queries and explained that there had not been any discussions with the IRP acting in the West and that the allowance had been decided on independently and were based on best judgment and with the information the panel had at the time. The report suggested that the scheme be reviewed in a year. Regarding an IT allowance, it was the intention that all councillors would be provided with a suitable device for use for council business. The cost of broadband had been included within the allowances

Councillor Griffiths responded to other points raised.

The chairman closed the debate and put to the motion to the vote.

Members voted, using the electronic poll on the Zoom platform. There were 84 votes cast, with 80 votes in favour, two against and two abstentions. The motion was declared carried.

**RESOLVED** that approval be given to the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendation for the Members' Allowance Scheme for North Northamptonshire from 1 April 2021 as follows:

1.1

- (1) The basic allowance in North Northamptonshire be set at £12,500;
- (2) Special Responsibility Allowances should be allocated as follows:

	£
Leader of the Council	27,000
Deputy leader of the Council	18,000
Member of the Executive:	13,500
Leader of the largest opposition party	10,000
Deputy leader of the largest opposition party (if 15 or over)	4,000
Leader of a party with 10 or more members	7,000
Leader of a party with 4 to 9 members	4,000
Chair of Scrutiny Committee (see recommendation 3 below)	13,500
Chair of Strategic Planning Committee	7,500
Chair of an Area Planning Committee	3,750

Chair of Licensing & Appeals Committee (see recommendation 4 below)	7,500
Chair of Audit and Governance Committee (see para 2.33 of the report)	7,500
Chair of Democracy and Standards Committee	7,500
Chairs of Employment Committee and Police & Crime Panel and Health and Wellbeing Board	4,000

- (3) A total allowance of £40,000 should be allocated to the Scrutiny function to be distributed within this financial envelope;
- (4) A total allowance of £10,000 be set aside and allocated amongst members chairing Licensing Panels of major significance during the municipal year;
- (5) The personal civic allowance paid to the chair of the Council should be set at £10,000 and that of the Deputy Chair, £5,000;
- (6) SRAs should not, at the present time, be allocated to the vice-chairs of the committees and boards listed. This recommendation should be reviewed at the end of the 2021-22 municipal year;
- (7) An attendance allowance of £400 per meeting should be paid to noncouncil members that have been co-opted onto council committees such as Audit and Governance and Democracy and Standards, to the Parent Governor representative on the Scrutiny Committee and to any other co-optees subsequently appointed;
- (8) No hourly rate should be specified for the childcare and dependant's carers' allowance. Payment should be made on the production of receipts, within a maximum ceiling of £6,500 per municipal year for any one councillor;
- (9) The criterion used for the annual updating of members allowances should be the NJC pay award to officers;
- (10) Travel and subsistence allowances should be in accordance with HMRC specified mileage allowances and the LGA recommended travel and subsistence payments. These rates should be equally applicable to co-opted members.
- (11) No additional allowance for IT equipment and use should be paid to members. The Basic Allowance has been set to incorporate an IT element.
- (12) The allowances scheme should be reviewed in a year's time, when experience of operating the new decision-making structure will have accumulated;
- (13) If the size of the executive is reduced, then the total allocation to the executive members should be redistributed within the same financial envelope, unless the change involves a substantial delegation of executive responsibilities to officers;
- (14) If a councillor holds two positions of which SRAs are payable, it is only the higher of these SRAs which can be claimed;
- (15) A 'diversity strategy' aimed at encouraging a wider range of groups to stand for council election should be a priority for the new council; (16) Where appropriate, those individuals who are Members of North

Northamptonshire Council from 1 April 2021 will receive pro-rata payments of Basic and SRA allowances for the period up to 10 May 2021 (to be known as the 'Interim Arrangement');

- 1.2 The council is required to determine how the total allowance of £40,000 allocated to the scrutiny function should be distributed. It is proposed that this will be determined by the new council early in the municipal year by Members.
- 1.3 The council is required to determine how the total allowance of £10,000 allocated to the licensing function should be distributed. It is proposed that this will be determined by the new council early in the municipal year by members.
- 1.4 That council adopt a scheme of Members' Allowances for North Northamptonshire Council with effect from 1 April 2021 until the scheme is amended by the North Northamptonshire Council and that the draft Scheme attached at appendix 2 to the report be approved.