

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Independent Remuneration Panel

FOREWORD

This report of the Independent Remuneration Panel sets out our conclusions and recommendations on members' allowances for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 for the consideration of Staffordshire County Council (the County Council).

The Panel was established under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2001 to provide advice and recommendations to the County Council on amounts to be paid under its members' allowances scheme. Members of the Panel are appointed by the County Council and are independent members of the community. The County Council is required to have regard to our recommendations in deciding what to pay councillors. Additionally, the County Council must also publish our recommendations and conclusions, together with the approved scheme.

PANEL MEMBERSHIP

- **Christina Robotham** (A retired Staffordshire Headteacher)
- **Annie Barrett** (A retired Staffordshire Deputy Headteacher)
- **Anthony Styles** (A retired Police Officer)
- **William Read** (A retired Emergency Planning Officer)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel is required to gather information, to hear and consider evidence and to make recommendations to the County Council on:

- the amount of basic allowance to be paid to members
- those positions that should receive special responsibility allowances (SRAs), and the level of those allowances
- travel, subsistence and certain other allowances

The full terms of reference of the Panel are set out in **Appendix A**.

The Process we have followed

We met on seven occasions from May 2021 until the conclusion of our review of members' allowances in February 2022.

In previous years we have arranged for a questionnaire to be sent to all Councillors in order to gain the views of County Councillors. This highlighted a need for us to investigate the Basic Allowance and the allowances paid to Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen. This is the basis of our report this year.

We considered a range of comparative information in respect of allowances paid in comparable local authorities and the remuneration offered to elected members by other authorities varies considerably.

12 local authorities were used in the comparison exercise. These LAs were taken from the CIPFA 'nearest neighbour' benchmarking data. Local Authorities are grouped together on a series of socio-economic datasets. The 12 LAs were:

- Cumbria
- Derbyshire
- Gloucestershire
- Lancashire
- Lincolnshire
- Norfolk
- Nottinghamshire
- Somerset
- Suffolk
- Warwickshire
- West Sussex
- Worcestershire

We met with the Leader, Leader of the Opposition and 12 Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen from various Committees of the Council.

Introduction

Our prime role has been to assess and recommend the allowances to be made available to elected members.

In formulating our recommendations, we have borne in mind:

- that the successful delivery of the various roles of members depends on a sense of corporate social responsibility and public service and that members are motivated to a significant extent by a sense of public good.
- the current economic climate and the continuing substantial financial constraints on the services which the County Council provides.

Nevertheless, those who decide to stand for election should not be required to make unreasonable sacrifices in their private lives. In this context, we continue to recognise that there is a substantial gap between the level of financial remuneration provided nationally to elected councillors and the commitment they are expected, or believe that they need to make, both in terms of time and responsibility, to fulfil the increasingly demanding roles in public life.

Proposals considered and recommendations

In preparation for our report this year, several common themes or issues were brought to our attention. These included a view that the Basic Allowance had not been reviewed for some time and some of the differences in allowances paid between roles did not properly reflect differences in time commitment and

responsibility/accountability. We recognised the inconsistencies between Chairmen and Vice Chairmen allowances.

In addition, in line with normal practice, the Special Responsibility Allowances are due to be increased in line with the employee pay award for 21-22. This increase is as yet unknown and will be applied from 1 April 2022.

Our proposals are set out below:

Leader, Deputy Leader and the Cabinet

We were not made aware of any issues regarding the appropriateness of allowances being paid to members holding these responsibilities. Analysis of comparative information suggested allowances for these posts differed considerably across County Councils but that the Staffordshire payments were reasonable when considered against them. It is, therefore, recommended that these SRAs remain at the same relative levels.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen

We are aware that the Chairman of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives a higher remuneration than other Overview and Scrutiny Chairman and we intend to review this as part of our investigations next year.

Regulatory Committee Chairmen

The Regulatory Committees include Planning, Audit and Standards and Pensions. They each perform a crucial regulatory role on behalf of the Council, and have the benefit of closer levels of regular, wider and ongoing professional officer support than Overview and Scrutiny Committee, however considering the legal requirements and responsibilities these Committees have, it is the Panel's view that the Audit and Standards Committee and Pensions Committee Chairmen should receive the same allowance as the Planning Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen.

We have previously recommended that the Chairmen and Vice Chairman of the Planning Committee must also chair the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel similarly to how the Leader and Deputy Leader also chair the Property Sub-Committee. For consistency, we therefore recommend that the Chairman of the Pensions Committee, must also chair the Pensions Panel.

Police, Fire and Crime Panel Chairman

We have no recommendations for change of the allowance payable to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel Chairmen.

Vice-Chairmen

As per our proposals for the Chairman of the Audit and Standards Committee and Pensions Committee, we believe that the Vice-Chairman should also receive the

same allowance as the Planning Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Vice-Chairman.

	Chair	Vice Chair	VC / C %
Scrutiny	£7,221.17	£2,528.05	35.0%
Health Scrutiny	£7,944.98	£2,889.95	36%
Planning	£7,221.17	£2,528.05	35%
Audit	£4,334.40	£1,444.45	33%
Pensions	£4,334.40	£1,444.45	33%
Corporate Parenting Panel	-	£2,528.05	-

We could not find any evidence why the percentage of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman differed across Committees, and therefore we propose to make that percentage consistent at 35%

Scrutiny	£7,221.17	£2,527.41	35%
Health Scrutiny	£7,944.98	£2,780.74	35%
Planning	£7,221.17	£2,527.41	35%
Audit	£7,221.17	£2,527.41	35%
Pensions	£7,221.17	£2,527.41	35%
Corporate Parenting Panel	-	£2,527.41	35%

Opposition Roles

We note that following the election, there has been a reduction in the number of the opposition to four Members with two Special Responsibility positions for the Leader and Deputy Leader.

Although questions have been raised in respect of the responsibilities of the role of the Opposition Leader and Deputy and the allowances paid, nothing was raised with the Panel to conclude that the expectation of the roles by the Authority has changed. Thus, our view is that the current level of the allowances should remain at the same level as a Cabinet Member although we intend to investigate these allowances further next year.

Civic

We are not proposing any changes to the allowances paid to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the County Council at this time. We intend to investigate these allowances next year.

Basic Allowance

We note that the basic allowance is intended to recognise:

- (a) the time commitment of all councillors, including calls on their time for meetings with officers, constituents and attending political group meetings; and
- (b) incidental costs, such as the use of their homes, telephone calls and meetings with constituents.

Some County Councillors have raised that the Basic Allowance has not been reviewed for some time. We have reviewed this and determined that the Basic Allowance is lower than the average of 12 comparable County Councils. We received a small number of responses from members. The views expressed were mixed on the Basic Allowance, however, we received no clear argument that there should be any change to the Basic Allowance therefore we recommend that the Basic Allowance remains unchanged.

Travel Allowances

We make no proposals for change to travel allowances paid to members for 2022/23.

Other allowances

Subsistence allowance

We make no proposals for change to subsistence allowances.

Meetings Allowance

We recommend that the "meeting allowance" paid to Appointed Members (i.e. faith and parent representatives on the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee or any independent members / persons serving the County Council), be increased by the same percentage as that made to other allowance in line with the NJC Pay award, this is currently unknown and will apply from April 2022.

Carers/Dependents Allowance

We had no issues raised with us in respect of these allowances and so make no proposals for change.

Next year

Next year we intend to review the allowances paid to the Chairmen and Vice-Chairman of the County Council. We also intend to review the difference in allowance paid to the Chairman of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other Chairmen.

We also propose to fully investigate the allowances paid to Members of the Opposition.

As always, the Panel always invite comments and input from County Councillors on our future programme.

**CHAIRMAN and Members of the
Independent Remuneration Panel on Members' Allowances**

Appendix A

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To meet annually, on agreed dates prior to the commencement of the County Council's financial year, and at such other times as required on agreed dates, as the County Council propose to amend, revoke or replace their Members' Allowance Scheme.

2. In their considerations, to have particular regard to (i) the previous reports and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (ii) the DETR's Guidance on Members' Allowances; (iii) the relevant Regulations referred to in the Guidance and those Regulations made in respect of the provision of pensions and pensionable remuneration for certain members of local authorities (iv) information submitted by the Chief Executive; and (v) such other information commissioned by the Panel, through the Chief Executive relevant to the Panel's Terms of Reference.

3. To make recommendations to the County Council as to the amount of basic allowances that should be payable to its elected members.

4. To make recommendations to the County Council about the categories of members who should receive a special responsibility allowance and as to the amount of such an allowance.

5. To make recommendations as to whether the County Council's allowances scheme should include an allowance in respect of the expenses of arranging for the care of children and dependants and if it does make such a recommendation, the amount of this allowance and the means by which it is determined.

6. To make recommendations to the County Council on which of their members, by designation, should be entitled to pensionable remuneration.

Quote from Constitution: As of 1 April 2014 new councillors will not be able to join the Local Government Pension Scheme. Any members who have joined the scheme before 31 March 2014 will be allowed to continue their membership for their **current** term of office (renewal on re-election will not be permitted).

7. To make recommendations to the County Council on travel and subsistence allowances for members and the level, or levels, of "meetings allowance" for appointed and co-opted members of County Council Committees.

8. To note, in their considerations and recommendations, that the County Council must have due regard to the recommendations of the Panel in any decision to maintain, amend, revoke or replace their Members' Allowance Scheme, but that ultimately, the determination of the Scheme is a matter for the County Council.

9. To note that the Panel's reports and recommendations, as made from time to time, will be publicised, as soon as reasonably practicable, in at least one local newspaper, be made available for inspection by the public at County Buildings and be published on the County Council's website.

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