

MEETING OF THE JOINT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2015

Foreword

This report has been produced for Maidstone Borough Council as part of the Council's requirement to receive independent advice from its statutory advisory panel on members' allowances. The Panel was established to review members' allowances for both Maidstone Borough Council and Swale Borough Council. The membership of the Panel on this occasion was Chair Mark Palmer (Development Director, South East Employers), Athos Loucas (Invicta Chamber of Commerce) and Steve Golding (Independent Member and local resident).

Swale Borough Council did not take part on this occasion as they had no business to discuss.

Both Members and Parishes are written to on an annual basis to ascertain if they have any issues they want the Panel to consider relating to Members Allowances.

Summary of Recommendations

This summary sets out the main recommendations. The considerations that have led to these recommendations are set out in the main report.

Before the Panel arrived at its recommendations it paid careful consideration to the previous reviews. In addition, the Panel took account of the statutory guidance which falls within the remit of the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Group Leaders Allowance

Although the Leader's Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) is included in the table below, this was not considered as part of the review, but included merely for completeness.

Allowance	No. of Cllrs	Current Amount	Recommended Amount
Leader	24	£23,326 p.a.	£23,326 p.a.
Leader of the Opposition	20	£5,831 p.a. (being 25% of Leader's Allowance)	£7,525 p.a. (based on 20 Cllrs in Party)
Leader of the Independent Party	5	£2,331 p.a. (being 10% of Leader's Allowance) min 5 Cllrs	£1,881 p.a. (based on 5 Cllrs in Party)
Leader of the UKIP Party	4	Nil (as Party has less than 5 Cllrs)	£1,505 p.a. (based on 4 Cllrs in Party)
Leader of the Labour Party	2	Nil (as Party has less than 5 Cllrs)	£753 p.a. (based on 2 Cllrs in Party)

Introduction of Pay Rise for Members

The Panel supported an annual pay rise for Members. This would include the Dependant Carer's Allowance and Non-Councillors Allowances, which should be in line with the indexation rise for staff salaries but not linked to performance pay.

Introduction of SRA for Vice-Chairmen

The Panel, whilst supporting the principle of a SRA for Vice-Chairmen, felt that this should be considered when they undertake the full review in March 2015.

Main Report

Group Leaders Allowance

The Panel considered the proposal put forward by a Member in which they requested that the calculation for the Group Leaders' allowance should revert back to the 2012 Scheme whereby a Group was defined by there being a minimum of two Members in a particular Party.

In 2013 the SRA was changed to reflect the significant role of the Leader of the Opposition and as a consequence a change was made to the SRAs as follows:-

Leader of the Opposition (25% of the Leader's allowance) and having a minimum of 10 Councillors = £5,831

Group Leader (10% of Leader's allowance) and having a minimum of 5 Councillors = £2,331

The Member felt that the previous scheme was fairer and would better reflect the composition of the Council. However, the Member suggested that the total sum of £11,663 should be shared on the basis of the number of Councillors in each political group as a proportion of the total number of Councillors on the Council.

The Panel, although supportive of the change, have suggested that a more robust way of proportion would be to split it based on the number of Members in each party, therefore the calculation would be as follows:-

£11,663 (being the total budget) shared between the remainder of the Members within other parties, (i.e. 31 Members) which equates to £376.23 per Member.

Liberal Democrat = 20 Members x £376.23 = £7,525

Independent = £1,881

UKIP = £1,505

Labour = £753

These figures could change throughout the year, dependent on bi-elections or defections.

The Leader's Allowance would remain unchanged and as long as they had the majority in their party, the amount of Members within their party would be immaterial.

Introduction of Pay Rise for Members

The Panel noted that Members pay was not subject to indexation and supported an annual pay rise for Members. They felt that this should include the Dependant Carer's Allowance and Non-Councillors Allowances, which should be in line with the indexation rise for staff salaries but not linked to any performance pay.

Introduction of SRA for Vice-Chairmen

The Panel considered the recommendation of the Licensing Committee who asked that the Panel consider the introduction of a SRA allowance for Vice-Chairmen across the Council. Whilst they supported the principle, they felt that this should be considered fully when all budgetary information was to hand when the Panel undertakes the full review in March 2015.