

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**  
**MAY 2013**  
**JOINT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

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**MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**

**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

In January 2013 the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel ("JIRP") undertook a partial review of the Maidstone Members' Allowances Scheme.

The recommendations of the JIRP were considered by Council in February 2013 and Council resolved:-

1. That the following clause relating to Broadband Allowance be included in the Members' Allowances Scheme as a new paragraph 11:-

Councillors are entitled to claim for the actual cost of their broadband service, up to a maximum of £23.49 per month. A copy of the Internet Service Provider's ("ISP") invoice must be supplied to the Payroll Department in May every year in order to continue to receive the allowance and should there be a change of provider, a copy of the new invoice must be sent to the Payroll Department informing them of the change of supplier and, if appropriate, the associated monthly and yearly cost thereafter.

2. That Schedule 1 of the Members' Allowances Scheme be amended as follows:-

Delete: Group Leaders Allowance;  
Add: Leader of the Opposition (minimum of 10 Councillors) (25% of Leader's Allowance) £5,831;  
Group Leader (minimum of 5 Councillors) (10% of Leader's Allowance) £2,331.

**BROADBAND ALLOWANCE**

The Chairman of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel suggested, at the same time as the recommendation of the Panel, that "the council may want to consider integrating the broadband allowance into the regular member's allowance. A number of councils are now integrating any broadband IT allowances into their basic allowance."

Following the agreed changes to the Members Allowances Scheme regarding broadband allowance, it has begun to prove difficult to supply copy invoices from

suppliers which show the "actual" cost of the broadband as many of the Councillors receive a "bundle/package" and suppliers are not willing to provide a breakdown. It is now proving to be an administrative burden for both Payroll and Committee Services to monitor and update the invoices from Members and deal with enquiries.

In view of the above, the Council would now like to consider incorporating the broadband allowance within the basic allowance for Members.

### Options

The current broadband allowance within the Members Allowances Scheme is to pay the actual cost of the broadband service, up to a maximum of £23.49 per month. 18 Members currently claim the allowance, of which 6 claim the maximum amount. The average monthly cost claimed is £18.89). Over the last 3 years the amounts paid for broadband are set out below:-

2010/11	£4,925
2011/12	£3,977
2012/13	£4,930

The current basic allowance for Members is £4,666 per annum and the current annual budget for broadband is £11,000. If all 55 Members were to claim the maximum amount of £23.49 per month, this would necessitate a budget of £15,503 per annum.

The options to consider are set out below:-

1. Divide the current spend on broadband (£5,000) between all 55 Members, which would equate to an increase in their basic allowance of £91 per annum (£7.58 per month).
2. Divide the current budget for broadband (£11,000) between all 55 Members, which would equate to an increase in their basic allowance of £200 per annum (£16.67 per month).
3. Increase the basic allowance from £4,666 per annum to £4,800 per annum (an increase of £134 per annum) which would equate to a spend of £7,370 per annum out of the £11,000 budget.

### **Recommendation:**

To consider the options set out in the report and determine the most appropriate option to recommend to Council.