

# **Councillors' Allowances 2021/22 –**

## **Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020**

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Author: Leader of the Council and the Chief Legal Officer

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

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### **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 To consider recommendations arising from meetings of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the level of Councillors' Allowances in Swindon for 2021/2022.
- 1.2 The Council is required by the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 to consider the recommendations of its Independent Remuneration Panel when making decisions relating to its Scheme of Councillors' Allowances. It is not required to adopt all or any of the Panel's recommendations. Decisions on the Scheme of Councillors' Allowances require the approval of full Council.

### **2. Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to (Minute for Confirmation):

- 2.1 Consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Councillors' Allowances for 2021/2022 and recommend to Council that:
  - 2.1.1 The levels of Councillors' Basic Allowance, Special Responsibility Allowances, and Travel, Subsistence and Dependent Care Allowances remain unchanged for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year.
  - 2.1.2 The level of Basic Allowance be index linked to the percentage increase in pay awarded to officers in the national round for a period of four years (commencing in May 2021 and ending in May 2025).
  - 2.1.3 The Council be asked to take a view on the Panel investigating the introduction of a Parental Leave Policy for Councillors.
  - 2.1.4 The Chief Legal Officer be authorised to introduce a revised Councillors' Allowances Scheme for 2021/2022, as attached at Appendix One, based on the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as approved and adopted by the Council.

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#### **3. Detail**

##### Background

- 3.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel for Swindon Borough Council was established in late 2001. It is currently made up of six members independent of the Council. One each is recruited from the Education, Business and Voluntary / Community Sectors, while three Lay Members are appointed following public advertisement.
- 3.2 Following its annual review, the Panel put forward its recommendations for the current 2020/2021 Municipal Year, which were adopted in full by Council at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2019 (Minute 21(1) 2019/20 of the Council refers). The Scheme of Allowances for 2020/2021 is attached at Appendix 1 for information.
- 3.3 The Councillors' Scheme of Allowances for 2020/2021 can be found in the Council's Constitution, available on the Swindon Borough Council website.

##### Review of Councillors' Allowances for 2021/2022

- 3.4 At its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020, the Panel noted that there were no significant changes proposed to the structure and role of councillors serving on the Cabinet and Council Committees, and that there had been no change in respect of the structure and responsibilities of the Standards or other regulatory Committees.
- 3.5 The Panel also sought the views of the Council's Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and the respective political groups on the levels of Councillors' Allowances for 2021/2022, and where representations were made these are set out in the report.

##### *Basic Allowance*

- 3.6 The Panel considered the appropriateness of the Basic Allowance in Swindon. The Panel noted that the Council had previously adopted an index link for the Basic Allowance, attached to the percentage increase in the Local Government Pay Settlement, which is ending in the 2020/2021 Municipal Year.
- 3.7 The Panel noted that the views of the Council's Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, and the respective political groups had been sought on the level of Basic Allowance and that no representations had been made.
- 3.8 Given the work already undertaken by the Panel on the 'reasonableness' of the Allowances for 2020/2021, it was minded to recommend that the level of Basic Allowance remain unchanged for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year.

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- 3.9 Given that the current index link is due to expire in May 2021, the Panel was also minded to recommend that the level of Basic Allowance be index linked again to the percentage increase in pay awarded to officers in the national round for a period of four years (commencing in May 2021 and ending in May 2025).

#### *Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)*

- 3.10 The Panel considered the appropriateness of the Special Responsibility Allowances in Swindon. The Panel noted that there are currently no proposals in place to amend the description or responsibilities of any of the posts that currently attract SRAs.
- 3.11 The Panel noted that the views of the Council's Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, and the respective political groups had also been sought on the levels of the SRAs in Swindon. The representations are set out in detail in the report to the Independent Remuneration Panel on 17th February 2020.
- 3.12 The Panel thanked the respondents for their submissions and determined that it is minded to recommend that the SRAs for Overview and Scrutiny Committee's and Standards Committee remain unchanged from the 2020/2021 levels. The Panel reiterated its position that SRAs are paid for additional responsibility over and above the Basic Allowance and are set for the role and duties of the post.
- 3.13 Given the work already undertaken by the Panel on the 'reasonableness' of the Allowances for 2020/2021, it was minded to recommend that the level of Special Responsibility Allowances remain unchanged for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year. (This is not including any changes resulting from the index link of the Basic Allowance to the Local Government Pay Settlement if agreed.)

#### *Travel, Subsistence and Dependent Care Allowances*

- 3.14 The Panel considered the appropriateness of the Travel, Subsistence and Dependent Care Allowance in Swindon. It was noted that the views of the Council's Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, and the respective political groups had also been sought on these and that no representations had been made.
- 3.15 As agreed at its meeting on 22 January 2020, a copy of the Parental Leave Policy adopted by Exeter City Council had been circulated to the Panel prior to its meeting. The Panel noted that Swindon Borough Council does not currently have a Parental Leave Policy in place for members, and that a number of local authorities within the South West are in the process of adopting one.

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- 3.16 Given the work already undertaken by the Panel on the 'reasonableness' of the levels of Travel, Subsistence and Dependent Care Allowances for 2020/2021, the Panel was minded to recommend that the level of Travel, Subsistence and Dependent Care Allowances remain unchanged for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year.

#### Recommendations

- 3.17 The Panel resolved that the Cabinet and Council be recommended:

3.17.1 That the levels of Councillors' Basic Allowance, Special Responsibility Allowances, and Travel, Subsistence and Dependent Care Allowances remain unchanged for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year.

3.17.2 That, given the current index link is expiring in May 2021, the level of Basic Allowance be index linked to the percentage increase in pay awarded to officers in the national round for a period of four years (commencing in May 2021 and ending in May 2025).

3.17.3 That the Council be asked to take a view on the Panel investigating the introduction of a Parental Leave Policy for Councillors.

#### **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 There are no alternative options proposed. The Cabinet can decide to support all the Panel's recommendations to the Council, or it can decide not to support the Panel's recommendations and to make its own recommendations to the Council.

#### **5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**

##### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The budget allocation for Councillors' Allowances for 2020/2021 covers the payment of Councillors' Basic Allowances, Special Responsibility and other Allowances, as specified in the Scheme of Allowances. The impact of the changes proposed by these recommendations is minimal.

##### Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel are compatible with convention rights.

##### Climate Change Impact

- 5.3 There are no specific climate change implications arising from this report.
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#### All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.4 There are no specific other implications arising from this report.

#### Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.5 A Diversity Impact Assessment has not been undertaken as the report concerns implementation of national regulations and does not make any recommendations that affects services or employment. The Independent Remuneration Panel considered potential impacts on equality groups as part of their deliberations, and their proposals on the level of allowances reflects their considerations.

#### Risk Management

- 5.6 There are no specific risk implications. Decisions on Councillors' Allowances are often controversial in media terms and thus decisions may have a reputational risk for the Council.

### **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Corporate Director of Finance and Assets (S151 Officer) and Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

### **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 Review of Councillors Allowances 2021-2022 report and appendices. Independent Remuneration Panel, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020

### **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2020/2021.

### **9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan**

- 9.1 This is not a Key Decision and is on the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for June 2020.