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Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

**Report of the Independent
Remuneration Panel
on the Review of Members' Allowances for the
2022/2023 Financial Year**

for

Cherwell District Council

January 2022

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Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel

Review of Members' Allowances for the 2022/2023 Financial Year

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Summary and Recommendations

Summary

- A. The Independent Remuneration Panel (“the Panel”) has carried out a full review of the Cherwell District Council Members’ Allowances Scheme (“The Scheme”). This report sets out the Panel’s recommendations.
- B. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 specifically Regulation 19 provide that before an authority makes or amends a scheme of allowances, the authority shall have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by an independent remuneration panel. The Council is required to have regard to the advice of the Panel on the levels and types of allowances to be paid under the Scheme.
- C. In summary, it is the Panel’s view that the increasing complexity, additional responsibilities and burden of local government make it imperative for individuals representing all sections of society to be able to stand for election as councillors. Allowances are not the only means of overcoming obstacles to wider democratic representation, but the absence of a national baseline for Member remuneration did not help efforts to attract a diverse range of people in the local community to consider becoming councillors.
- D. The Panel acknowledged that the Cherwell District Council (CDC) Members’ Allowances are relatively low in comparison to other similar councils. Additionally, there had been no cost of living increase in Members’ Allowances in 2021/2022 a position agreed by Full Council on 22 February 2021. The Panel considered that CDC level of allowances therefore represented good value for money for the residents of Cherwell.
- E. In reaching its recommendations, the Panel has carefully considered all of the submissions and representations made to it and the additional evidence that was available. In accordance with the Panel’s terms of reference, it has looked at the relevant elements of the Council’s existing Members’ Allowance Scheme. The Panel believes that this review of the Scheme and the recommendations it has

made will give the Council a sound and comprehensive scheme of allowances until it is reviewed again.

- F. The Panel thanks the Director of Law and Governance and Democratic Services for the information provided to assist in their work.

Recommendations to Council

Having given due consideration to the information provided to the Panel, it recommends Full Council agree the following for inclusion in the Members' Allowance Scheme 2022/2023:

(NB. Whilst the Panel's recommendations throughout are for an increase in line with the staff cost of living pay award to give an indicative idea of cost and change, a 1.75% increase has been applied to the figures below for information):

It should also be noted that any councillor who stands down or is not re-elected will remain on the payroll for the whole of the financial year so will be paid the increase when agreed for the period they were councillor (1 April – 9 May 2022). If the settlement is not agreed until after 31 March 2023, there would be discussion with payroll and the former councillor about the arrangements to make the payment.

- (a) That the Basic Allowance be increased in line with the staff cost of living increase rounded up or down, whichever is closest, to give 12 equal payments, and payment of the increase backdated to the beginning of the financial year 2022/2023, 1 April 2022, should a settlement not be agreed before that date.

	Current Level 2021/22	Current Level plus proposed £300 IT allowance	(Possible increase of 1.75% for 2022/2023)	(Possible increase of 1.75% for 2022/2023) plus £300 proposed IT allowance
Basic Allowance	£4512 pa	£4812 pa	£4596 pa	£4896 pa

(Calculation of increase - $4512 \times 1.75\% = 78.96 + 4512 = 4590.96 / 12 = 382.58$ rounded up = $383 \times 12 = 4596$)

(Irrespective of % increase, if agreed, the ICT allowance of £300, if agreed, would be added to the basic allowance giving a basic allowance of £4,812)

- (b) That all Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA's) be increased in line with the staff cost of living increase rounded up or down, whichever is closest, to give 12 equal payments, and payment of the increase backdated to the beginning of the financial year 2022/2023, 1 April 2022, should a settlement not be agreed before that date.

- (c) That the capped limit for payment of an allowance for chairing an ad-hoc meeting of the Appeals Panel, Licensing Committee, Personnel Committee and Standards Committee be increased from four meetings to five. An annual allowance equivalent to the ad-hoc allowance for chairing a meeting will continue to be paid irrespective of how many meetings are held.

	Current Level 2021/2022	(Possible increase of 1.75% for 2022/2023)
Leader of the Council*	£7,680 pa	£7,812 pa
Deputy Leader of the Council*	£2,652 pa	£2,700 pa
Executive Members holding a Portfolio	£6,708 pa	£6,828 pa
Leader of the Opposition	£3,096 pa	£3,156 pa
Chairman of Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee	£3,732 pa	£3,792 pa
Chairman of Budget Planning Committee	£3,732 pa	£3,792 pa
Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	£3,732 pa	£3,792 pa
Chairman of Planning Committee	£4,464 pa	£4,548 pa
Chairman of Appeals Panel	£264 SRA plus £264 per meeting to a capped limit of £1,320	£270 SRA plus £270 per meeting to a capped limit of £1620
Chairman of Licensing Committee	£264 SRA plus £264 per meeting to a capped limit of £1,320	£270 SRA plus £270 per meeting to a capped limit of £1620
Chairman of Personnel Committee	£264 SRA plus £264 per meeting to a capped limit of £1,320	£270 SRA plus £270 per meeting to a capped limit of £1620
Chairman of Standards Committee	£264 SRA plus £264 per meeting to a capped limit of £1,320	£270 SRA plus £270 per meeting to a capped limit of £1620

(The Leader of the Council receives the Leaders' allowance and an Executive Portfolio allowance. The Deputy Leader of the Council receives the Deputy Leaders' allowance and an Executive Portfolio Allowance. All SRAs are paid in addition to the Basic Allowance)

- (d) That the Co-optee and Independent Person allowance be increased in line with the staff cost of living increase rounded up or down, whichever is closest, to give 12 equal payments, and payment of the increase backdated to the beginning of the financial year 2022/2023, 1 April 2022, should a settlement not be agreed before that date.

	Current Level 2021/2022	(Possible increase of 1.75% for 2022/2023)
Co-optee and Independent Person Allowance	£768 pa	£780 pa

- (e) That Dependants' Carers' and Childcare Allowances remain at the current level and are capped at 40 hours per month payable subject to production of receipts and cannot be paid to a family member of the claimant:

	Current Level 2021/2022	Proposed Level for 2022/2023
Childcare	£10 per hour	£10 per hour
Dependent Relative Care	£20 per hour	£20 per hour

- (f) That Travelling and Subsistence Allowances remain at the current level:

	Current Level 2021/2022	Proposed Level for 2022/2023
Bicycles	20p per mile	20p per mile
Motorcycles	24p per mile	24p per mile
Motor Vehicles	45p per mile	45p per mile
Electric or similar Specialised Vehicles	45p per mile	45p per mile
Breakfast Allowance	£6.02 per meal	£6.02 per meal
Lunch Allowance	£8.31 per meal	£8.31 per meal
Evening Meal Allowance	£10.29 per meal	£10.29 per meal

- (g) That Democratic Services continue to book overnight accommodation if required.
- (h) That Non-Executive Director allowances be increased in line with the staff cost of living increase rounded up or down, whichever is closest, to give 12 equal payments, and payment of the increase backdated to the beginning of the financial year 2022/2023, 1 April 2022, should a settlement not be agreed before that date.

	Current Level 2021/2022	(Possible increase of 1.75% for 2022/2023)
Non-Executive Directors Graven Hill Village Holding Company Limited and Graven Hill Village Development Company Limited	£4,464 pa	£4,548 pa

- (i) That from 1 April 2022 to ensure parity and fairness in ICT provision to all Councillors, all CDC provision of IT equipment cease with effect from 1 April 2022 (including laptops, tablets, mobiles, landlines, printer and print cartridges). A one off increase of £300 be added to the Basic Allowance reflecting an average annual expenditure on ICT equipment, to be retained in future years as part of the Basic Allowance. This is to cover, but not limited to, the following Council-related 'IT incidental' expenses that Councillors may incur in the course of carrying out their duties: home broadband; home landline and personal mobile calls; personal computer, laptop, tablet; printer, printer cartridges and paper.

The Panel's Report

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003 require local authorities to review their Allowances Schemes and to maintain the Panel to consider and make recommendations on new schemes.

1.2 The Regulations set out that the following issues are to be addressed by the Panel:

- **Basic Allowance:** each local authority must make provision for a basic, flat rate allowance for all elected Members. The allowance must be the same for all Members and can either be paid in a lump sum or in instalments.
- **Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA):** each local authority may make provision for the payment of SRAs to elected Members who have significant responsibilities. The Panel has to recommend the responsibilities that should be remunerated and the levels of allowance.
- **Co-optees' Allowance:** each local authority may make provision for the payment of an allowance to co-optees' for attending meetings, conferences, and seminars
- **Childcare and dependants' carers' allowance:** each local authority may make provision for the payment of an allowance to elected Members who incur expenditure for the care of children or dependent relatives whilst undertaking particular duties
- **Travel and subsistence:** each local authority may determine the levels of travel and subsistence allowances and the duties to which they should apply
- **Indexation:** each local authority may determine that allowances should be increased in accordance with a specified index and can identify the index and set the number of years (not exceeding four) for which it should apply

- Backdating: each local authority may determine that, where allowances are made to an allowance scheme, the allowances as amended may be backdated.
- 1.3 All Councils are required to convene their Panel and seek its advice before they make any changes or amendments to their Members' Allowances Scheme. Elected Members must "have regard" to their Panel's recommendations before setting a new or amended Members' Allowance Scheme.
- 1.4 Following the meeting of the Independent and Parish Remuneration Panel ("the Panel") in December 2020, the Panel recommended to Council that both the basic and special responsibility allowances and all other allowances for the 2021/2022 financial year should be frozen and remain the same in line with the public sector pay freeze. At the 22 February 2021 meeting of Full Council, Members resolved to agree the recommendation of the Panel without modification and allowances were frozen for the 2021/22 financial year. The scheme remained in force throughout the 2021/2022 financial year.
- 1.5 This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003 (as amended). It outlines the Panel's findings following a review of the District Council's current Allowance Scheme and its recommendations for 2022/2023 in respect of:
- (a) the levels of basic and special responsibility allowances
 - (b) the travelling, subsistence, and dependants' carers' allowances
 - (c) Co-optees and Independent Persons allowance; and
 - (d) Non-Executive Directors on Council Owned Companies
 - (e) The introduction of Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental and Adoption leave
 - (f) A consistent and transparent Members IT Allowance
 - (g) Review of the Members' Allowances Scheme and Indexation
- 1.6 For information, throughout this report, all year references throughout this report, 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, refer to the financial year. "Members" and "councillor" is used interchangeably throughout the report,

2.0 The Independent Remuneration Panel

2.1 The current membership of the Panel is:

Ms Jeanette Baker
Mr Andrew Hodges
Mr David Shelmerdine
Mr Christopher White

2.2 The Panel met on 22 November 2021 to consider and agree its recommendations for 2022/2023 financial year.

2.4 Mr Christopher White was appointed as Chairman of the Panel.

2.5 Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer, Natasha Clark (Governance and Elections Manager) and Lesley Farrell (Democratic and Elections Officer) provided the Panel with administrative advice and support.

3.0 Terms of Reference of the Panel

3.1 The Panel's terms of reference as originally agreed by the Council when the Panel was first constituted (as amended by the 2003 Consolidating Regulations which relate to the determination of local schemes for travelling and subsistence allowance) are outlined in its reports dated 3 July 2001 and 4 July 2003.

3.2 The principal matters on which the Panel can make recommendations are set out in the introduction. As the Panel currently meets annually to review the Scheme and make recommendations for the forthcoming financial year, indexation is not currently applied to the allowance scheme.

3.3 It is possible for the Council to apply indexation and for the Scheme to be confirmed on that basis annually for a period of up to four years. In this instance, Council would need to amend the Terms of Reference of the Independent Remuneration Panel that currently state it meets annually and to agree any level of indexation such as any annual pay award to staff.

4.0 The Panel's Adopted Approach

4.1 Since 2001, the Panel's approach has been that recommendations should be formulated appropriate to the circumstance of the Council, recognizing that the roles of Executive and Non-Executive Members are now well-established.

4.2 The following underlying principles continue to form the basis of the Panel's review process:

- (a) the allowances should take account, as far as possible, of the amount of time taken by Members to fulfil their roles.
- (b) the scheme should ensure, as far as practical, that as wide a range of people as possible should be able to stand for election and that they should not be financially penalised in so doing. This, in turn, should increase the likelihood of an inclusive approach to council services.
- (c) the levels of the allowances should not be treated as salary but rather as a level of 'compensation' and recognition of the time and level of responsibility that such public duty requires.
- (d) that an element of Members' time in terms of their work as a Councillor should be treated as voluntary and therefore should not be remunerated.
- (e) the assumption that all Members will participate as fully as possible in Council business and play an active role in their Wards and that the importance of these mutually inclusive roles should be reflected in the level of the basic allowance.
- (f) the reviewed scheme should take account of the payments included in the current scheme and any increases which might be recommended should be balanced against the interests of the residents in the District, although we accept that the Council must consider the political implications of the levels of the allowances open to it to pay.
- (g) the reviewed scheme should continue to be subject to well informed periodic reviews.

5.0 The Work of the Panel

- 5.1 The Panel had previously determined the underlying principles on which the levels of Members' Allowances should be based, as outlined at paragraph 4.2 above.
- 5.2 The Panel's approach required an assessment of the amount of time Councillors commit to their duties and their associated workloads in the context of the identified special responsibilities for Lead Members and Committee Chairmen. It is important to highlight that the focus of the review is on the roles rather than the individuals who occupy them.
- 5.3 The Panel was aware of the responsibilities and workloads of Executive members with their specific portfolios.

5.4 The Panel noted the additional workload and complexity in the role of the Leader of the Council in leading the political direction of the Council, considerable responsibility for delivering the Council's budget and policy framework and steering the partnership dimension of the Council.

5.5 As part of its review, the Panel considered the following information which informed its conclusions:

- (a) a copy of the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme for 2021/2022
- (b) a comparison of neighboring authority Members' Allowances
- (c) comparative data from the Members' Allowances survey undertaken by South East Employers which outlines the basic, special responsibility and other allowance payments made by Council's in the South East Region
- (d) the overall financial position of the Council
- (e) the general economic climate
- (f) any recent changes in the roles, responsibilities, and workload of specific Member post
- (g) a summary of Members' responses to the Annual Survey (further details of the survey are set out in paragraphs 6.1 – 6.8)
- (h) any additional comments Members wished to make in respect of the current allowance scheme
- (i) the discussions with the Member who spoke to the Panel
- (j) the increase in cost of living and level of CDC staff pay awards. As local negotiations for the annual staff pay award had not yet commenced for 2022/2023, this information was not available for the Panel.

6.0 Members' Allowance Scheme Annual Survey

6.1 The Panel continues to place great importance on the information gathered by way of the Annual Survey.

The purpose of the Annual Survey is to determine:

- (a) the amount of time Members estimate they spend on Council business during an average month

- (b) Members views on the adequacy, or otherwise, of the current levels of Members' Allowances at the Council; and
 - (c) whether Members would like to address the Panel in person.
- 6.2 The Annual Survey had been circulated to all 48 elected Members. 19 surveys were returned, which represents 39.58% of the Council's membership.
- 6.3 The Panel was very grateful to those Members who responded to the survey. The Panel agreed to repeat the exercise again as it firmly believes that the information requested was vital to its effort in undertaking proper and meaningful review.
- 6.4 The Panel surmised that those Members who did not respond to the survey were happy with the current allowance scheme.
- 6.5 Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council, was the only Member who requested to address the Panel. Councillor Wood joined the meeting on 22 November 2021 and subsequently answered questions from The Panel. The Panel thanked Councillor Wood for his insightful comments and contribution to the review.
- 6.6 The Panel noted that those Members who responded to the Annual Survey continued to show a significant variation in the average number of hours they spent on their roles as Councillors, ranging from 10 to 160 per month.
- 6.7 Results from questions 1 – 4 of the 19 surveys received were as follows:

Question 1- N/A (councillor name)

Question 2 – How long have you been a Councillor?

- Less than 1 year 3
- 1 – 4 years 3
- 5 – 8 years 5
- 9 – 12 years 4
- Over 12 years 4

Question 3 – What is your current role?

- Leader of the Council/Leader of Opposition/Group leader 2
- Deputy Leader of the Council Deputy Leader of Opposition/Deputy Group Leader 2
- Chairman/Vice Chairman of the Council 0
- Executive Member 2
- Committee Chairman/Vice Chairman 4

- None of the above 9

Question 4 – What is your employment status?

- Retired or otherwise not employed 9
- Employed full time 9
- Employed part time 0
- Other 1

6.8 Questions 5 – 11 sought comments from Members on the level of basic allowance, SRA, travel, subsistence, childcare and dependants’ carers’ allowances, time commitment and voluntary aspects of time given and any additional comments.

- (a) Seven of the respondents receive an SRA and considered that an average of 36 hours per month related to the post for which the SRA was received.
- (b) Sixteen respondents considered that part of their time was given on a voluntary basis. One considered that it was not and two thought that it maybe.
- (c) With regards to the current rate of allowance and if it was thought to be adequate. 6 Members thought that the allowance should be increase in line with officer pay award. 2 thought it should be increased by an amount not linked to the officer pay award, 5 considered the allowance should be frozen at the current level 3 thought that Members’ Allowances should be assessed every 4 years rather than every year and 3 thought that Members’ Allowances should be assessed every 4 years and linked to the staff pay award.
- (d) Seven respondents commented on current levels of Basic and Special Responsibility allowances as follows:
 - I accept that some Councillors are more in need of the allowance than I.
 - Being a Councillor cannot be the preserve of the financially secure.
 - Allowances should be directly linked to officer pay to ensure that the percentage awarded neither narrows nor widens.
 - I think the allowance is substandard for what workload should be expected.
 - Any % increase should be in recognition of pressures on Councillors.
 - I would normally agree with linking increases to Officers, but under current national wage conditions would support a continued freeze.
 - Allowances should be assessed every 4 years and linked to the staff pay award having been benchmarked first.

(e) With regards to Dependants' Carers' Allowance, Childcare Allowance, Travel and Subsistence Allowances, 6 respondents made the following comments:

- Own vehicle travel allowance needs to include electric vehicles including electric motorcycles. As the rate is really little to do with fuel type but more to do with maintaining the vehicle, the rate should be at a level to suit increasing cost. Motorcycle rates should be nearer to those of four wheeled cars.
- Subsistence allowance needs to keep up with real costs
- Increased allowance for green travel
- These Allowances should encourage potential councillors to get to meetings particularly if with children and caring obligations, they should go up.
- I did not know we were entitled
- I would like to see travel allowance that encourages members to use public transport. i.e. free bus pass or train tickets with lesser tariff for car use.

(f) The following additional comments were made by 5 of the respondents:

- I think Councillor allowance is important to attract people from different backgrounds into local politics, not just the retired.
- I believe that the allowance should be based on the number of committees and proportionate to the attendance of those committees from something like an 80% base of expected attendance. Currently many do little and few do a lot. Thus if one puts in the hour's needed one is proportionately penalised as the charitable component increases. Those that do little are rewarded.
- Most councillors do not get involved in local politics for the money.
- Nobody tries to become a councillor for the money!!
- I think allowances are about correct although emails have increased time spent.

7.0 Basic Allowance

7.1 The Panel considered the level of Basic Allowance. It is required in the relevant legislation that a Basic Allowance of the same value be provided to all members of the Council. The allowance is intended to remunerate councillors for their time spent as a councillor, covering incidental costs incurred by them as ordinary members of the Council, including the use of their homes.

7.2 In previous deliberations, the Panel has consistently used the annual pay settlement for Cherwell District Council (CDC) staff as one of their main considerations for recommending adjustment to the levels of the Basic and SRA paid to Members. As reported in paragraph 5.5 (j), negotiations have not begun for the staff pay award for 2022/2023

- 7.3 Having regard to the various calls on councillors' time, conscious that a proportion of time is voluntary, the levels of basic allowance paid by comparator councillors, and taking into particular consideration the current economic climate and the comments from the Members' survey:

The Panel recommends that the Basic Allowance be increased, in line with the CDC staff cost of living increase 2022/2023 and rounded either up or down, whichever is closest, to give 12 equal payments, with payment of the increase backdated to the beginning of the financial year 1 April 2022 should agreement not be reached before that date.

8.0 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)

- 8.1 The Panel reviewed the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA).
- 8.2 Consistent with the Basic Allowance being frozen in 2021/2022, Council agreed on 22 February 2021 the recommendation of the Panel that SRA's should also be frozen in 2021/2022.
- 8.3 In line with its recommendation to increase the Basic Allowance for 2022/2023, the Panel agreed that SRA should be increased on the same terms.
- 8.4 The Panel considered the current limit on the number of meetings for which an SRA can be paid to the Chairman of ad-hoc committees, Appeals Panel, Licensing Committee, Personnel Committee and Standards Committee, for chairing a meeting when one is required. Noting that the Personnel Committee had already sat four times in 2021/2022, it was considered that the capped limit should be increased to five meetings for these committees. The payment of an annual allowance equivalent to chairing a meeting would continue to be paid.

The Panel recommends that SRA's be increased in 2022/2023, in line with the staff cost of living increase 2022/2023 and rounded either up or down, whichever is closest, to give 12 equal payments, and payment of the increase backdated to the beginning of the financial year, 1 April 2022 should agreement not be reached before that date.

The Panel recommends that the capped limit for payment of an allowance for chairing an ad-hoc meeting of the Appeals Panel, Licensing Committee, Personnel Committee and Standards Committee be increased from four meetings to five. An annual allowance equivalent to the ad-hoc allowance for chairing a meeting will continue to be paid irrespective of how many meetings are held.

9.0 Co-optee and Independent Persons Allowance

- 9.1 In considering co-optee and Independent Persons allowance, the Panel agreed a consistent approach to increase these allowances in line with the Basic Allowance and SRA's.

The Panel recommends that the Co-optee and Independent Persons allowances be increased in line with the staff cost of living increase 2022/2023 and rounded either up or down, whichever is closest, to give 12 equal payments, and payment of the increase backdated to the beginning of the financial year, 1 April 2022 should agreement not be reached before that date.

10.0 Non-Executive Directors on Council Owned Companies

- 10.1 In 2018 it was agreed that Members who were Non-Executive Directors (NED) of both Graven Hill Companies (Graven Hill Development Company Limited, (DEVCO) and Graven Hill Village Holdings Limited (HOLDCO)) should receive an allowance comparable to the Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the Planning Committee Chairman.
- 10.2 In line with the recommendations for SRA's, the Panel agreed to recommend a consistent increase to the NED allowance.
- 10.3 Allowances paid to Non-Executive Directors are paid by the company not Cherwell District Council.

The Panel recommends that the NED allowance should be increased in line with the staff cost of living increase for 2022/2023 and rounded either up or down, whichever is closest, to give 12 equal payments, and payment of the increase backdated to the beginning of the financial year, 1 April 2022 should agreement not be reached before that date.

11.0 Travelling and Subsistence Allowances

- 11.1 In reviewing the current level of Travelling and Subsistence Allowances, the Panel noted that all travel rates are set at the specified HM Revenues and Customs rates and consequently had no implications for the tax liabilities of Members. Travel rates for motorcycles and motor vehicles are paid regardless of the cc of motorcycle or motor vehicle concerned and remain the same. These rates remain unchanged.
- 11.2 In relation to Subsistence Allowances, the Panel had originally agreed that allowances should be paid up to the maximum rates notified by the National Joint Council for Officers index linked to the Retail Prices Index (including mortgages).

- 11.4 Since 1996 when the National Joint Council for Officers ceased to produce nationally agreed subsistence rate for local government staff, subsistence rates have been a subject for local determination. The Council applies the Local Government Association rates.
- 11.5 Expenses incurred by councillors appointed as Non-Executive Directors of companies will continue to be paid at the same rate and recharged to the relevant company.

The Panel recommends that the travelling and subsistence allowances should remain at the current levels.

12.0 Dependants' Carers' and Childcare Allowance

- 12.1 In considering the dependants' carers' and childcare allowances, the Panel noted that these allowances were claimed very infrequently but agreed that the availability of the allowances was extremely important to encourage those with families or care responsibilities to stand as a councillor.
- 12.2 The Panel agreed that the dependants' carers' and childcare allowance should be maintained with no change to the rates payable and a minor change to the wording of childcare allowance in the Scheme.
- 12.3 The Panel noted that the wording in the Members' Allowance Scheme was not consistent for dependants' carers' and childcare allowance claims and agreed that this condition should be amended as follows:
- 12.4 The current wording reads:
- Subject to the submission of receipts, and in the case of the childcare allowance, to the allowance not being paid to a member of the claimant's household.

This should be amended to read:

- Subject to the submission of receipts, and to dependants' carers or childcare allowance not being paid to a member of the claimant's household.
- 12.5 All other conditions to claim the allowance would remain the same.

The Panel recommends that other than Dependants' Carers' allowance not being paid to a member of the claimant's household, there be no change to

the existing levels and requirements for claiming dependants' carers' and childcare allowances.

13.0 Maternity, Paternity, Shared parental, and Adoption leave.

- 13.1 The Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer advised the Panel that the concept of Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental and Adoption Leave for Members was being considered by various Independent Remuneration Panels nationally to ensure that individuals were not being disadvantaged.
- 13.2 The Panel noted that this was a complex matter and few councils had adopted this policy in their Members Allowance Scheme as Members were distinct from employees of the Council.
- 13.3 The Panel also noted the "six month rule" where councillors are required to attend a formal meeting at least once in a six month period to remain a councillor. If a councillor needed to be absent for a longer period, they could request a dispensation for an extended period and during this time would continue to receive their basic allowance. The complexity came for Chairmen and Members of the Executive where an additional special responsibility allowance was paid and positions would need to be substituted during periods of extended leave.
- 13.4 The Panel agreed it required additional information on Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental and Adoption leave within a Members' Allowance Schemed as it was a complex matter requiring detailed information on various scenarios. Noting that a Member would not be disadvantaged from receiving their Basic Allowance and could request a dispensation from attending meetings, the Panel agreed not to recommend inclusion of a specific section on Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental and Adoption Leave in the 2022/2023 Members' Allowances Scheme but would consider as part of a future review.

14.0 Member IT Allowances

- 14.1 The Service Desk Manager joined the meeting for the Panel's consideration of this matter.
- 14.2 The CDC Members' Allowance Scheme does not include reference to Members' IT and nor is there a separate policy regarding the provision of IT equipment and support to support to members.
- 14.3 Members are supported by the IT service in relation to their IT need but the current approach is inconsistent. The Panel noted that a number of longer serving Members have their broadband paid for by the council and IT kit, including laptops, tablets, mobile phones and printers, provided, however as new Members have

been elected, this is not offered as a matter of course. Councillors use their own broadband connection and the majority of councillors use their own devices.

- 14.4 Member IT allowances have not previously been considered as part of the Annual Members' Allowance review. The Panel agreed that given the increase in the use of technology with virtual and hybrid meetings and the adoption of a "paper lite" approach, it was timely and appropriate to review this to achieve a consistent and transparent approach.
- 14.5 Given the importance and reliance on IT in the way Members now work, it is important that no current or potential councillor is negatively impacted and unable to perform their role as they do not have suitable equipment. Any proposal should ensure this is addressed. It is also assumed that IT Services would continue to provide support to Members to ensure they able to access emails, meetings, meeting papers etc.
- 14.6 For openness, transparency and to ensure a consistent approach for all councillors, the Panel agreed that a one-off increase of £300 reflecting an average annual expenditure on ICT equipment should be added to the Basic Allowance. This would be retained in the base figure in future years as part of the Basic Allowance to cover, but not limited to, the following Council-related 'IT incidental' expenses that Councillors may incur in the course of carrying out their duties: home broadband; home landline and personal mobile calls; personal computer, laptop, tablet; printer, cartridges, and paper. This would be written into the Members' Allowance Scheme.
- 14.7 As the amount would be added to the Basic Allowance, it would be paid as part of each monthly allowance payment from 1 April 2022.
- 14.8 The Panel considered that including an amount as part of the Basic Allowance was preferable to the provision of kit. It would end the current disparity in the scheme and enable councillors to make personal choices.
- 14.9 With the inclusion of IT incidentals as part of the Basic Allowance, the Council would cease to provide IT kit to Members from 1 April 2022. The Panel requested that the IT Team work with councillors who are currently provided with IT kit to ensure a smooth transition.

The Panel recommends that from 1 April 2022, all CDC provision of IT kit cease and a one-off increase of £300 be added to the Basic Allowance, to be retained in future years as part of the Basic Allowance to cover, but not limited to, the following Council-related 'IT incidental' expenses that Councillors may incur in the course of carrying out their duties: home broadband; home landline and personal mobile calls; personal computer, laptop, tablet; printer, cartridges, and paper.

15.0 Review of Members' Allowance Scheme and Indexation

- 15.1 As set out at paragraph 1.2, each local authority may determine that allowances should be increased in accordance with a specified index, can identify the index and set the number of years (not exceeding four) for which it should apply.
- 15.2 The Panel noted that a council can apply an index to their allowances in circumstances where the only change each year is the application of the index. Many authorities have adopted an indexed scheme whereby allowances are amended annually by the reference to the annual pay award for staff at that authority and takes effect from the date on which the staff award takes effect.
- 15.3 CDC does not currently have an indexed scheme, rather the Panel meets annually and makes recommendations to Council for consideration as part of the following years scheme.
- 15.4 In considering the introduction of an indexed scheme, the Panel acknowledged that, as with all of its recommendations, the decision on Members' Allowances and, alongside this, an indexation scheme, sits with Council but Members must have regard to the view of the Panel.
- 15.5 The Panel commented that transparency was a key and crucial element of its annual review. Were a four year scheme with indexation to be agreed by Council, the independence of an annual review which ensures the scheme is fair for all would be lost. The Panel agreed not to make a recommendation on indexation.

Mr Christopher White (Chairman)
Independent Remuneration Panel
January 2022.