

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

TO:	COUNCIL		
DATE:	31 JANUARY 2023		
TITLE:	COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2023/24 - 2026/27		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR BROCK	PORTFOLIO:	LEADERSHIP
SERVICE:	COUNCILLOR SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as set out in appendix A, following their meeting on 23 November 2022, in relation to the scheme of Councillors' Allowances for the next four financial years 2023/24 - 2026/27. The Panel will continue to review the scheme each year of the four-year term.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 A motion will be moved at the meeting to recommend the scheme as set out in Appendix B.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Remuneration Panel reviews annually the Council's scheme for Councillors' Allowances and makes recommendations for a scheme of allowances to include:
- i) The amount of basic allowance to be paid to all Councillors;
 - ii) The duties in respect of which Councillors should receive a special responsibility allowance, and the amount of such an allowance;
 - iii) Allowances for the care of children or dependants.
- 3.2 The Remuneration Panel was set up to include at least three and no more than five independent members appointed to represent stakeholders of the Council. Its current membership is:
- Linda Fort - member with experience of the local media
 - Mick Pollek - member with experience of the local trade union movement

- Lady Audrey Durant - member with experience of the local voluntary sector

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Recommendations by the Remuneration Panel set out in Appendix A, are reflected in the updated scheme at Appendix B. The Panel considered that the Councillors' Allowances Scheme was still 'fit-for-purpose' and should continue predominantly in its current form for a further four years. This would mean that BA and SRAs would continue to increase in line with the Local Government Pay Settlement (LGPS). Based on this analysis, the Panel decided not to recommend any significant changes to the scheme.
- 4.2 The Panel noted that the Councillor allowances had been uplifted by the NJC pay award (4.04% for allowances) and backdated to April 2022.
- 4.3 The Panel recommended Councillors should be able to receive benefits available to Council staff where this is possible.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The provision for the payment of allowances to Councillors gives local authorities the scope to set allowances schemes to suit local needs and to help ensure that Councillors are not financially disadvantaged in serving as elected Members.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no environmental or climate implications.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 South East Employers conducts an annual survey of members' allowances that provides benchmarking data. The Panel was provided with a copy of the South-East Employers Members' Allowances Survey which shows a comparison of the level of allowances in Reading with other comparable authorities.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to this decision.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities to set up and maintain an independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations to the authority concerning the allowances to be paid to councillors.

- 9.2 Any decision to amend, revoke or replace an allowances scheme will have to be taken by the Authority having regard to the recommendations of the Panel.
- 9.3 The Council may not delegate this function to a Committee or to an officer. The Council has to take all decisions relating to the adoption of its Scheme of Councillors' Allowances.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The 2022/23 budget for Members' Allowances is currently £598,200. It is anticipated that the budget will remain sufficient to meet the costs of the Scheme in 2023/24, subject to the number of councillors eligible for SRAs remaining similar to the current year.
- 10.2 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy includes a provision for the base budget to be increased in line with the Local Government Pay Settlement.
- 10.3 These costs will be reviewed annually as part of the Council's budget setting process.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None