

Report of: The Independent Remuneration Panel  
To: Blackpool Council on Wednesday 28 June 2023

## **Review of the Members' Allowances Scheme**

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council has appointed an Independent Remuneration Panel to advise on the adoption of a scheme of members' allowances.
- 1.2 This report is a synopsis of the deliberations and recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for Blackpool Council to advise the Council on its Members' Allowances scheme. The IRP was convened under The Local Authorities' (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021) ("the 2003 Regulations"). These regulations, which arise out of the relevant provisions contained in the Local Government Act 2000, require all local authorities to establish and maintain an advisory Independent Remuneration Panel to review and provide advice on Members' allowances on a periodic basis. All Councils are required to convene their IRP and seek its advice before they make any changes or amendments to their members' allowances scheme. They must 'pay regard' to their IRPs recommendations before setting a new or amended Members' Allowances Scheme (2003 Regulations paragraph 19).
- 1.3 We undertake a full review once every four years and have met on eight occasions since January 2023 to undertake this review of the Members' Allowances Scheme and have met with both Cllr Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council, Cllr Paul Galley, Leader of the Principal Opposition Group and Mr Antony Lockley, the Council's Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Strategy.
- 1.4 We also held a joint meeting with Tracy Manning the Monitoring Officer from Fylde Borough Council and the Fylde Borough Council Independent Remuneration Panel, together with Mark Towers as Blackpool Council's Monitoring Officer (and Deputy Monitoring Officer at Fylde Borough Council).
- 1.5 We were reminded that Blackpool Council and Fylde Borough Council have shared arrangements in relation to the Standards Framework and have adopted the same Code of Conduct for elected and co-opted members and arrangements for dealing with complaints of member misconduct. As part of these shared arrangements there is a shared pool of three Independent Persons who input into that process. These positions have an allowance which is paid for on a 50/50 basis between the two Councils.

## 2.0 Methodology

2.1 We were supplied with the following information to assist us in our work:

- The Government's Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances published in July 2003
- The Council's current Members' Allowances Scheme
- A chart outlining the Council's political management structure (both pre-election and post-election 2023)
- A copy of the Annual Council meeting agenda for May 2023 detailing the appointment of Committees and the schedule of meetings for the forthcoming municipal year.
- Research on comparator levels of allowances from single tier Councils in the North of England and in the former Audit Commission Group of Councils (mainly seaside towns)
- Details of Executive responsibilities of the Cabinet Members (pre and post-election).
- Follow up review by North West Employers of the scrutiny function undertaken in late 2022/ early 2023.
- Details of a Members Survey carried out in 2022 regarding the level of time spent on various activities for both council and wholly owned company work
- Numerous role descriptions of council appointed elected member positions and role descriptions for the positions of the wholly owned company Boards
- An information document detailing the size, background, numbers of staff and activities of each of the Council's wholly owned companies
- Information submitted regarding how the role of a councillor in Blackpool had changed between the two local government boundary reviews (2002 and 2022) which had been submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in 2022
- Arm's-Length Management Organisations Board Member Remuneration Survey 2022
- Statistics for number of civic events over the last 6 years

2.2 We also met with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group to seek their views on the level of allowances and other factors including the operation of the scrutiny arrangements.

2.3 In arriving at its recommendations, the IRP is expected to take into account the following:

- Allowances paid in comparable councils, namely comparable single tier Councils in the North of England and in the former Audit Commission Group of Councils (mainly seaside towns)
- Views of the senior elected members interviewed
- Any other consideration that the Council obliges the IRP to consider
- The economic climate

2.4 Across the eight meetings, the Panel was supported at various times by the Director of Governance and Partnerships, the Head of Democratic Governance and the Scrutiny Manager.

### **3.0 Basic principles – the overall Allowances Scheme**

3.1 In undertaking the review of the Scheme, we were aware of, and had regard to, the following:

- (a) That following the Local Elections in May 2023, although there had been an influx of new councillors, overall there had been minimal change to the type of positions within the Council's Executive and committee structures, with minor alterations to responsibilities in the Executive, additional Cabinet Assistants, some changes in scrutiny committee responsibilities and the addition of an additional scrutiny committee.
- (b) It was acknowledged that the decision of the Council regarding its review of the Member Allowances Scheme in 2015 had brought the Council's levels of basic allowance to the northern average for basic allowances for single tier authorities/ former Audit Commission family group Councils ('northern single tier average') and this had been retained in 2019. The comments made by the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group at the Panel meeting in April 2023 were that broadly the level of the current allowances was about right.

### **4.0 The formulae for calculating allowances**

4.1 In 2015, we adopted a formula for calculating a basic member allowance, centred around the Joseph Rowntree Living Wage, now known as the Real Living Wage ('living wage'). This was in line with good practice adopted by other Councils. It was considered that this formula was wholly appropriate and should be continued to be used for this review.

4.2 The formula was: Living wage @25 hours per week, less approximately 12% for public service. In 2015 and 2019 we believed that the increase in living wage would be a good factor to maintain a consistency for future reviews:

4.3 The living wage in 2019 was £9.50 per hour and in 2023 this is now £10.90 per hour. The hours per week, from the Members Survey in 2013, determined that Blackpool councillors worked on average 25 hours per week. In 2022, a Member Survey was re-undertaken by Democratic Governance staff, to help identify whether this average had changed. This survey was done on a sampling basis reflective of the differing roles undertaken.

4.4 The members surveyed included those appointed to companies, some Chairs of Committees, Cabinet Members, and some with no position of special responsibility, covering all political parties and Independent elected members.

- 4.5 We were presented with the findings of the 2022 survey and on review of those findings, it was found that 25 hours per week was the average total amount of time spent on Council activities was still valid.
- 4.6 As part of the research we undertook, we not only obtained the average allowances for comparable positions across all single tier Councils in the north of England together with those in the former audit commission family group (northern single tier average), but also the % allowed for public service in those using this type of a formula. However, a benchmarking exercise with some northern unitary councils has shown that there was a need to increase the percentage of time allocated for public service (the 'public service' principle) and this ranged from 20% to 40%, higher than that currently being used. We felt that a figure of 20% better reflected the amount which should be given for public service and so have updated the formula to reflect that.
- 4.7 A revised formula for basic allowance would therefore be:
- Living wage @25 hours per week, less approximately 20% for public service.

## **5.0 Public Service Principle**

- 5.1 This is the principle that an important part of being a councillor is the desire to serve the public and therefore, not all of what a councillor does should be remunerated. Part of a councillor's time should be given voluntarily. This public service concept or ethos was a key introduction in 2015 to the formula and we therefore wished to continue to use this. However, as indicated at para 4.6 and following a benchmarking exercise we have updated this to 20%.

## **6.0 Fair Remuneration Principle**

- 6.1 In putting forward our recommendations in 2015 and 2019 we considered that they provided a package of financial support which was reasonable, and in some way went towards addressing the disincentives from serving in local politics. This was based on our research at the time, and speaking to the then Leader of the Council and Leader of the Principal Opposition Group. By continuing to use the formula from 2015 (as adapted above) we felt our recommendations would continue to assist in this regard. In essence, this meant that the recommendations we made reflected the increases in the 'Living Wage'.
- 6.2 We are also aware of the economic climate (as referenced in para 2.2) and feel that for serving councillors (even though as an allowance and as the survey indicates councillors give on average 25 hours per week), many undertake the role on a part time basis and therefore the allowances contribute to the cost of living they face. We have taken this into consideration in our recommendations below.

## **7.0 Level of basic allowance**

- 7.1 We note that the data showed that the basic allowance as of 1 April 2023 was now comparable with the 'northern single tier average' and recognise that the basic allowance is an integral part of the overall scheme and that this payment is the only allowance to which many of the councillors are entitled. We believe that we have strong evidence on which to base our recommendations, which are referenced in this report.
- 7.2 In the meetings with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group, both had commented that the level of allowances seemed appropriate following the 2015 and 2019 reviews and had parity with other similar local authorities. We have therefore taken this on board and recommend a 2.0 % increase for this current financial year (as the annual uplift). We have come to this figure using the formula at para 4.3 Whilst this brought a figure of 2.13%, in undertaking full scheme reviews, the common practice is to consider whether the figures should be rounded up or down, as appropriate.
- 7.3 Although the budget for the Members Allowances scheme is the Council's responsibility, not the Panel's, we were aware that the Council's revenue budget includes a 2.0% increase for the NJC pay award for 2023/ 2024. We also noted that the pay award offers already made to unions which had been declined as part of the ongoing discussions for the National Joint Council for Local Government Service pay award for 2023/ 2024 were in excess of this figure. We have therefore concluded that 2.0% is a fair increase to recommend for the basic allowance taking into account the economic climate and the Fair Remuneration Principle as set out in section 6.

## **8.0 Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)**

The basic allowance using the formula agreed in 2015 and 2019, would be factored to determine other Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs). In comparing the resultant SRA figures these all compared favourably with the average our research had shown from 'northern single tier average' for SRA positions.

## **9.0 Posts not uplifted in the 2022 Review**

- 9.1 We noted that for the annual uplift in 2022 the following posts were not given the uplift for that year. As part of this full review, we recommend that they also be given that increase which all other Special Responsibility Allowance roles benefitted from in 2022, or dealt with differently as indicated elsewhere in the report. These roles were:
- Chair and members of the Shareholder Committee (see section 17)
  - Chair, Audit Committee Chair and non-executive directors of all Council companies (see section 17)
  - Independent Standards Persons (see section 15)
  - Co-opted members of Scrutiny Committees (see section 16)

## **10.0 Leader of the Council and Executive Members**

10.1 We noted on the list of responsibilities for Executive members that the positions of the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Members were very similar to that in place prior to the election and in line with the proposals outlined by the Leader of the Council prior to the election. We therefore concluded that they continued to be at the same level and therefore in our view should continue to receive the same level of remuneration subject to the annual uplift.

## **11.0 Leader and Deputy Leader of the Principal Opposition Group and Leader of Second Opposition Group**

11.1 In 2015, we came to the view that the allowance for the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group should be at the same level as a Cabinet Member (subject to that group consisting of at least 25% of the Council members – i.e. 11 members) and the Deputy Leader of that Group should receive an allowance at 50% of that level of remuneration. In September 2018 we recommended to Council and it was agreed that in order for a Second Opposition Group Leader to qualify for an allowance the Group should consist of 10% of the Council members (i.e. four members). As part of our review we conclude that these criteria should be retained. We note that there is no second opposition group returned after the 2023 election. However, we believe that it should remain part of the Member Allowance scheme and we recommend that we be consulted on the appropriate allowance should a group of 4 or more members be formed in the future.

## **12.0 Lead Scrutiny Member/ Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board**

12.1 In 2019, we noted that North West Employers (NWE) had carried out a review of Scrutiny at Blackpool Council and had made several recommendations and comments regarding parity of esteem with the Executive and the appointment of a Scrutiny Leadership Board to oversee the scrutiny function. We were advised that the Lead Scrutiny Member/ Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board would be high status and have a very important leadership function.

12.2 We noted that in the 2019 review the Council had previously had a Chair of the Scrutiny Management Committee and that was the same as that of an Executive Cabinet Member and concluded at that time that looking at the responsibilities of the role of Lead Scrutiny Member / Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board and the time commitment expected, that it warranted an allowance the same as a Cabinet Member.

12.3 As part of this 2023 full scheme review, we were also furnished with a follow up report conducted by North West Employers (NWE) which reviewed the progress made since the 2019 NWE scrutiny review. The Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group had also received a copy and we questioned them on the follow up report and their thoughts on how the Lead Scrutiny Member/Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board role had worked since 2019.

- 12.4 They informed us that scrutiny had worked well and the Scrutiny Leadership Board had a good structure and form and was the right co-ordinating body for scrutiny. It was noted that the Lead Scrutiny Member/ Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board was a vital role especially going forward to make sure that the Board continued to develop and not become another ordinary scrutiny committee.
- 12.5 We reviewed the role of the Lead Scrutiny Member/Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board role and note that since the election at the Annual Meeting the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group had been appointed to this role.
- 12.6 We noted that there was some overlap with both these roles and accordingly have agreed that the Lead Member Scrutiny/ Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board should not receive a second allowance in full and note the similarities with the Chair of the Shareholder Committee (in terms of meetings, both formal and informal attended and time commitment) and have recommended both positions receive the same level of allowance.

### **13.0 Scrutiny Chairs, Vice Chairs and Cabinet Assistants**

- 13.1 For scrutiny committee Chairs and Vice Chairs we considered that the formula applied in 2015 and 2019 was applicable for this review (1 x basic). In previous full reviews we had agreed that the positions of Cabinet Assistants be given the same level of allowance as the Vice Chair of the scrutiny committees and we agreed that this should continue.

### **14.0 Other Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs**

- 14.1 In discussion with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group we considered whether the Chairs of Planning, Licensing, Appeals and Audit Committees should be remunerated on a similar level to Scrutiny Chairs. On review, we believe that the current formula applied is correct (i.e. 0.8 x basic). This is based on the importance placed on scrutiny by the Council, particularly following the North West Employers review in 2019, and the follow up review in 2022, and the contribution of scrutiny in holding the Executive to account, and working with the Executive to develop policy. This also applied to the Vice Chairs of these committees who would receive 50% of what the Chairs received. No change is therefore proposed.

### **15.0 Independent Standards Persons**

- 15.1 Blackpool Council and Fylde Borough Council have shared arrangements in relation to the standards framework and have adopted the same Code of Conduct for Members and arrangements for dealing with complaints of member misconduct. As part of these shared arrangements, we were aware that there is a shared pool of three Independent Persons.

- 15.2 A joint meeting was held with Fylde Borough Council Independent Remuneration Panel and their Monitoring Officer. We heard how the respective roles of the independent persons worked at Blackpool and Fylde and we heard of examples of recent meetings including hearings that the independent persons had been involved in. The last review had taken place in September 2021 and a revised figure of £950 per annum was agreed with an annual uplift in line with the scheme.
- 15.3 The current remuneration for this position was £966.62 per year, with payment made per council on a 50/50 basis. After deliberations and an acknowledgement that remuneration for this position should reflect the time and responsibility needed and to recognise that there had been no cost of living rise last year for the role, it was considered appropriate that an uplift should be given. The Joint Panel agreed to recommend both Blackpool and Fylde Borough Councils that the remuneration for Blackpool and Fylde Independent Persons should be £1,000 per year, starting from the 1st June 2023 (in order to allow Fylde Borough Council to agree this allowance also).

## **16.0 Co-opted Independent Audit Committee Member and Scrutiny Co-opted Members**

- 16.1 We reviewed the role profiles for both positions and looked at the number of meetings they attended and other commitments the roles had to undertake and concluded that since their last review, the roles and associated workload had not significantly changed. As stated in para 9.1 we do feel the Scrutiny co-opted member positions should have the 2022 uplift backdated.

## **17.0 Payments to Wholly owned Company and Shareholder Committee roles**

- 17.1 In previous reviews we had used the findings of the Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMO) Board Governance Surveys, to help determine payment for Chairs, Audit Committee Chairs and Board Members, which compared different levels of payments for these positions. We again, for consistency, used this information which was relevant up to December 2022 and covered 24 different wholly owned companies of councils.
- 17.2 We met Antony Lockley the Council's Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Strategy and he shared with us his thoughts on the Council's role of shareholder, its relationship with the companies it owned and how it made appointments to Non-Executive Director positions. In particular, we considered issues relating to the skills, appointment and selection process of independent Non-Executive director positions and Councillor Non-Executive Director positions. Mr Lockley advised that from the Council's perspective having the required skills, knowledge and diversity for any Non-Executive director position was essential to have an effective Board which would lead the companies on the Council's behalf.
- 17.3 In the discussions with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group, they also advised that they would, as far as practicable, seek to match required skills and diversity requirements of the Boards when making their appointments. They both also reiterated the important leadership role of the Chair of the Company Board in leading the company through times of change as had been experienced with the pandemic.

- 17.4 We noted that the level of remuneration of Non-Executive Directors for Blackpool's wholly owned companies was slightly below the benchmark norm, although we did acknowledge that being wholly owned companies there was an element of public service expected.
- 17.5 We were also asked to consider remuneration for the new position of Vice Chair at the Blackpool Housing Company and sought more information about this appointment. We noted that the position of Vice Chair was not a standard position in the company structures. We were informed that there was a potential expansion of the Blackpool Housing company in the coming months with Government support and there had been recent interviews for a Non-Executive Director and one applicant possessed the qualities to be a Vice Chair. This person (the Council believed in its role as shareholder) could provide support from a leadership perspective in the development and expansion of the company.
- 17.6 We considered that the allowance for a Non-Executive Director should be increased to £3,000 and with regard to the remuneration for the Chair of Company Boards, a 4% uplift be applied as it had not been in 2022 (see para 9.1). In addition to this the 2.0% average increase as would be applied to the formula-based allowances giving a total of £5,546.
- 17.7 We concluded that the Chair of the Audit Committee should receive an allowance between that of a Non-Executive Director and that of the Board Chair and that figure would be £4,250 per annum. The new Vice Chair of Blackpool Housing Company (BHC) and the Vice Chair of Lumen would be £4,000 per annum for each role and it is recommended that this would be reviewed in 12 months following the introduction of the BHC role.
- 17.8 With regard to the Chair of the Shareholder Committee, we recommend that this be applied on a similar model to that agreed by the Council in 2021 (i.e., the same as a Chair of a wholly owned company Board less 20% to reflect some Executive responsibility with regard to the role). This would give a remuneration of £4,436. For Shareholder Committee members that this be £3,000 as this has been parity with the allowance for Non-Executive Directors in previous reviews. We recognise the importance of both Non-Executive Directors and Shareholder Committee members and the roles they play both for the company and the shareholder particularly in recent times with the pressures placed on wholly owned companies of Councils, and the need for good governance at all levels. The proposed allowances are also in line with those comparator companies referred to in para 17.1.
- 17.9 We were reminded of the legal view that special responsibility allowances for directors of wholly owned 'transport' companies must be paid by the Council rather than directly by the company. It was noted that this would apply to both Transport and Airport Companies. The same amount would be paid whether paid direct by the company or through the Members' Allowances Scheme. In the same regard we also were reminded that a councillor NED must claim company related expenses to the value of that agreed in the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme and not a higher figure which may be determined by the company.

## 18.0 Armed Forces Champion

18.1 In our review of this role in November 2022, we recommended that no allowance be paid for this role and that this role be reviewed as part of this full review. This was agreed by Council. We have sought information from many different towns and cities with similar champion roles, we concluded that this role, as with many champion roles is one undertaken out of public duty/ service and has not been remunerated. We have therefore concluded that this position should not be remunerated in Blackpool.

## 19.0 Civic Mayor and Deputy Mayor

19.1 In 2012, 2015 and 2019 we recommended to Council that the position of Civic Mayor should be remunerated at a lower level and Council agreed that this be the case. The common factor here was that the level of the Blackpool remuneration was in each case lower than the northern single tier average. In 2019 we also noted that in relation to statistics of events attended by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor that there had been a significant reduction of 42% in events attended from four years earlier.

19.2 We noted that in the last four years there has again been a reduction in events attended by the Civic Mayor and Deputy Mayor, however we did acknowledge that this had also overlapped with the pandemic. We did seek clarification from the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group about their views on the role of the Mayor in Blackpool. Both spoke about the role being a very positive one and added value to the civic pride in the town and one that should develop and grow. We have therefore decided to re-apply the original formula for the Civic Mayor's allowance (and the Deputy Mayor's allowance) to reflect the importance of the role.

**Table 1: Level of allowance recommended using relevant formula (these have also been rounded, as per para 7.2)**

	<b>Formula (for 2023)</b>	<b>Recommended allowance for each position</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Basic allowance</b>	Living wage (£10.90 per hour) @25 hours per week, less 20% for public service	<b>£11,317</b>	See section 5
<b>Leader of the Council</b>	3 x basic	<b>£33,951</b>	See section 10
<b>Deputy Leader of the Council</b>	60% of Leader of the Council	<b>£20,370</b>	See section 10
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	45% of Leader of the Council	<b>£15,277</b>	See section 10
<b>Leader of Principal Opposition (Minimum of 25% of seats on Council i.e., 11)</b>	Same as Cabinet Member	<b>£15,277</b>	See section 11
<b>Deputy Leader of Principal Opposition Group</b>	50% of Leader of Principal Opposition Group.	<b>£7,638</b>	See section 11

	<b>Formula (for 2023)</b>	<b>Recommended allowance for each position</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Leader of another Opposition Group (minimum 10% of seats on Council i.e., 4)</b>	No current position	<b>N/A</b>	See section 11 – should a group be formed of 4 or more councillors then the IRP's views be sought on a formula.
<b>Lead Scrutiny Member/ Chair of Scrutiny Leadership Board</b>	Same as Chair of the Shareholder Committee on the basis that this is a second allowance.	<b>£4,436</b>	See section 12- If this becomes a stand-alone role in the future then this be reviewed by the Panel
<b>Chairs of Scrutiny Committee</b>	1 x basic	<b>£11,317</b>	See section 11
<b>Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees</b>	50% of Chairs of Scrutiny Committee	<b>£5,658</b>	See section 13
<b>Scrutiny Co-opted Member</b>	Stand-alone figure – based on comparable authorities – (no formulae applied)	<b>£555</b>	See section 16 and section 9
<b>Cabinet Assistant</b>	Same as Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Committees	<b>£5,658</b>	See section 13
<b>Chairs: Planning, Licensing, Appeals and Audit committees</b>	0.8 x basic	<b>£9,053</b>	See Section 14 and section 21
<b>Vice-Chairs: Planning, Licensing, Appeals and Audit committees</b>	50% of Chairs of Committees	<b>£4,526</b>	See Section 14 and section 21
<b>Independent Person Standards</b>	Stand-alone figure – based on comparable authorities – (no formulae applied)	<b>£1,000</b>	See Section 15 - (Allowance to be jointly agreed with Fylde Borough council).
<b>Independent Person Audit</b>	Stand-alone figure – based on comparable authorities – (no formulae applied)	<b>£798</b>	See Section 16 and section 9
<b>Chairs of Council Company Boards</b>	In line with ALMO Board Governance survey	<b>£5,546</b>	See Section 17, section 21 and section 9
<b>Chair of a Company Audit Committee</b>	In line with ALMO Board Governance survey	<b>£4,250</b>	See Section 17, section 21 and section 9
<b>Vice Chair of the Blackpool Housing</b>	In line with ALMO Board Governance survey	<b>£4,000</b>	See Section 17 and section 21.

	<b>Formula (for 2023)</b>	<b>Recommended allowance for each position</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Company and Vice Chair of the Lumen Housing Ltd</b>			(Review in June 2024).
<b>Other Non-Executive Directors (incl Lumen Housing Ltd)</b>	In line with ALMO Board Governance survey	<b>£3,000</b>	See Section 17, section 21 and section 9
<b>Chair of Shareholder Committee</b>	20% less than the Chair of a Wholly owned company Board	<b>£4,436</b>	See Section 17, section 21 and section 9
<b>Members of Shareholder Committee</b>	Same as No-Executive Directors	<b>£3,000</b>	See Section 17, section 21 and section 9
<b>Mayor</b>	1 x 1.25 basic	<b>£14,146</b>	See Section 19
<b>Deputy Mayor</b>	25% of Mayor	<b>£3,536</b>	See Section 19 and section 21

## **20.0 Parental Leave of Absence Policy**

- 20.1 At the Council meeting on 21 November 2018, a notice of motion was passed to request that we consider and report back on a parental leave of absence policy for elected members. We considered a report setting out the reasons for the request and examples of existing policies in place at other Local Authorities. The reasons given in the motion for the introduction of a policy include that the role of a Councillor should be open to all. We considered good practice from various authorities and recommended (and Council agreed) that a parental leave of absence policy for Blackpool councillors and associated adjustments be made to the Members' Allowances Scheme.
- 20.2 As part of this 2023 full review we reviewed the Parental Leave of Absence Policy and sought the views of the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group. Both spoke of the need to have such a policy and whilst acknowledging that it may not have been activated yet, with a significant number of new councillors, with the average age of councillors falling and many being in employment then having such a policy in place was the right thing to have. We have therefore not made any changes to the policy and recommend that it is maintained as part of the Members Allowances scheme.

## **21.0 Payment of more than one Special Responsibility Allowance**

- 21.1 As part of this full review we considered the current guidance regarding payment of additional SRA allowances and noted the exceptional circumstances in which additional allowances were currently paid (i.e. Shareholder Committee roles, Company Non-Executive Directors/ Chairs, paying an additional SRA for a member covering another member's absence whilst on Parental Leave of absence and for someone undertaking the role of Deputy Mayor).
- 21.2 In November 2022 we recommended (and Council agreed) that in relation to Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Appeals Committee, Audit Committee, Planning Committee and Public Protection Sub-Committee, the special responsibility allowance (SRA) for these positions can be paid in addition to one other SRA from within the political management structure as set out in the constitution, we continue to support this view. As indicated in Section 12 we also now recommend that the position of the Lead Scrutiny Member/ Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board be partly paid as an additional SRA.
- 21.3 Subject to the paragraphs above it was considered that the expectation that only one allowance should be paid should continue, however, where a councillor is appointed to additional roles and there is a direct request to do so, then we believe that as a Panel we should consider such a request on its merits. One scenario we did consider was that of someone in receipt of a Chair or Vice Chair of a Scrutiny Committee SRA and whether that should be used as a basis for qualification for an additional SRA. We are of the view that, based on the guidance summarised at para 21.4, it would not qualify to be paid as an additional allowance. (It could be paid as a first allowance with other allowances identified in the scheme paid as an additional allowance).
- 21.4 Our consideration of requests for additional allowances would cover the level of responsibility, time required for each role and the public perception of the additional allowance to determine whether the circumstance warranted payment of one allowance, more than one allowance or a percentage thereof. We would then recommend to Council accordingly.

## **22.0 Review of Approved Duties**

- 22.1 It was noted that there had been some minor changes to wording in 2019 but acknowledged that many Council constitutions had similar wording for what constituted approved duties in a Leader and Cabinet system in accordance with para 15 of the 2003 Regulations. We therefore agreed that no changes be made to this part of the scheme.

## **23.0 Annual Uprating of the Scheme for Future Years**

- 23.1 We noted that a key principle for the last two full scheme reviews was to uprate the scheme in line with the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Service scheme and we agreed that that principle is continued in future years.

## 24.0 Other Allowances

- 24.1 We considered that the 'other allowances' in the scheme were on the whole correct or required minor change or removal and make the following recommendations:

**Table 2: Other Allowances**

<b>Carers and Dependents Allowance</b>	Recommend no change - the wording to remain the same as the current Members' Allowances Scheme.
<b>Bus/ Tram Passes</b>	Recommend no change - the wording to remain the same as the current Members' Allowances Scheme.
<b>Car Parking</b>	Recommend no change - the wording to remain the same as the current Members' Allowances Scheme.
<b>Mileage allowances</b>	Recommend this be in line with the staff mileage allowance.
<b>Public and Other Transport</b>	Recommend no change - the wording to remain the same as the current Members' Allowances Scheme.
<b>Subsistence allowances and overnight subsistence</b>	Recommend this be in line with the staff allowance.
<b>Accommodation claims</b>	Recommend no change - the wording to remain the same as the current Members' Allowances Scheme.

## 25.0 Recommendations to Council

- 25.1 The Panel recommends that a new Allowances Scheme be adopted by the Council based on the recommendations below with the rationale as set out in the report.
- 25.2 That the basic allowance for members should be set at £11,317 per annum (a 2.0% increase) and backdated to the fourth day after the local election (Monday 8 May 2023).
- 25.3 That the special responsibility allowances for members should be as set out as recommended in Table 1 of this report (following paragraph 19.2 of this report) and commence from the current date of appointment for the councillor concerned into those positions in the Municipal Year 2023/ 2024.
- 25.4 That the position and criteria for a Second Opposition Group Leader be retained in the Members Allowances scheme but no allowance be determined but should a group be formed of 4 or more councillors then the IRP's views be sought on the level of an SRA, as set out in para 11.1.
- 25.5 That should the Lead Scrutiny Member/ Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board be no longer occupied by the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group, then the IRP's views be sought on the level of the SRA, as set out in section 12.
- 25.6 That no SRA continues to be paid to the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Standards and Chief Officers Employment Committees on the basis that they meet infrequently.

- 25.7 That no SRA continues to be paid to the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Public Protection Sub Committee on the basis that these positions are occupied by the same councillors who hold the positions of Chair and Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee and an SRA is payable for those positions.
- 25.8 That the criterion for the payment of additional SRAs be as set out in section 21, including the endorsement of previous decisions relating to additional SRAs.
- 25.9 That as set out in Section 18, no allowance be paid to the Armed Forces Champion.
- 25.10 That the 'other' allowances as set out within the scheme should be set as recommended at Table 2 (following paragraph 24.1).
- 25.11 That the Parental Leave of Absence Policy currently part of the Members' Allowances Scheme not be changed and be readopted.
- 25.12 That the annual uprating to be applied to the Members' Allowances Scheme in respect of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances continue to be in accordance with the National Joint Council for Local Government Service pay award.
- 25.13 That in relation to the seven wholly owned Council companies and Lumen Housing Ltd, effective from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023, we recommend the following allowances to the Council (and to Blackpool Housing Company in respect of Lumen Housing, as its parent company):
- Chairs of Boards should receive an allowance of £5,546 per annum
  - Vice Chairs of Boards (Blackpool Housing Company and Lumen Housing Ltd only) should receive £4,000 per annum
  - Chairs of Board Audit Committees should receive £4,250 per annum
  - Non-Executive Directors (not holding the above positions) (or Board Members for Lumen Housing) should receive £3,000 per annum.

The expenses for these roles for councillor NEDS to be in line with the Members' Allowances Scheme. This would acknowledge the level of responsibility required with some deduction for public service. We recommend that the allowances for the Vice Chairs of Blackpool Housing Company and Lumen Housing Ltd be reviewed in June 2024.

- 25.14 In relation to the recommendation above, the payments for the Chairs and Non-Executive directors for the Transport and Airport companies be paid via the Members' Allowances Scheme, with the payments to the other companies paid by the companies themselves.

Mrs H Hockenhull  
Mrs K Eaton  
Mr N Kilgallon  
Mr G Molyneux