

**INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL –
NOTE OF MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2020 via ZOOM**

Present: Mr David Cam, Chairman

Mrs Helen Hockenhull

Mrs Karen Eaton

Tracy Manning, Director of Resources

Ian Curtis, Head of Governance

Katharine McDonnell, Senior Democratic Services Officer (note taker)

Tracy Manning welcomed everyone to the meeting.

She advised that since the Panel had last met there had been a change of Leadership and some of the members in senior roles. Following consultation with Chairman of the Panel, she had sought the view of the two group leaders prior to this meeting. The responses from the Leader of the Council were outlined in the report to Panel.

Ian Curtis presented the 2021/2022 Member Allowance Scheme report, a copy of which had previously been circulated to members of the Panel.

The report covered the current level of members' allowances and the special responsibility allowances; dependent carers' allowance; and a comparison of allowances paid in 2006 and 2019. The report also provided information regarding the level of allowances adjusted to 2001 prices (the retail price index); information regarding the different allowances, the annual budgeted amount for members' allowances and the Council's financial position. He advised that the advice from the Chief Financial Officer was that the level of future funding was uncertain.

Mr Curtis discussed the current Special Responsibility Allowances, and the ability of the Panel to set an allowance and link the allowances to an index. He explained that the allowances would then increase with the index but there would be a need to review the allowances every four years rather than annually.

The report provided a detailed spreadsheet comparing the allowances paid by other Lancashire authorities and authorities who operated a committee system.

It was noted by the Panel, that whilst the Fylde allowances were average in comparison to other authorities, when looking at the allowances on a per member, per resident basis, Fylde's allowances were the highest in Lancashire.

Turning to the comments from Leader of the Council, the Panel discussed the linking of the allowances to an index which could be implemented for up to a four year period. It was noted that some other authorities did so, and whilst it would be reasonable for Fylde allowances to be index linked, the Panel felt on balance that to make the change mid-term would be unwise. It was felt that the matter should be revisited in 2022, so any changes could be considered prior to the start of the new term of office.

In regards to the Mayoral allowances, Mr Curtis advised that whilst it was not strictly within the statutory remit of the Panel, the Panel were permitted to offer an opinion on the level of allowances. Mr Curtis provided some comparison data for the mayoral allowances, looking at other Lancashire authorities and CIPFA families.

The panel discussed the level of the Deputy Mayor's allowances, the level of attendance of the Deputy Mayor at events and the commitment of the Deputy Mayor in supporting the Mayor's charity fundraising. In response to a question from the Panel, Mrs Manning advised that the mayoral allowances were increased every year linked to the Retail Price Index.

The Panel thanked Ian for his report and presentation.

The Panel considered their recommendations for the financial year 2021-22 regarding:

- The level of basic allowance payable to all councillors
- Which councillors are to receive special responsibility allowances
- The levels of special responsibility allowances
- Whether to continue to pay dependants' carers' allowance and, if so, whether to cap the rates payable; and
- whether to continue to pay travel and subsistence allowances and, if so, of how much

The Panel discussed the increase made to allowances last year and the impact on council finances and loss of income this year. It was considered that it would not be prudent to increase any of the allowances again this year and therefore the Panel recommended that there would be no increase in the basic allowance or the SRAs and group leader payments.

The Panel confirmed that the for dependents' carers' allowance and travel allowances be maintained as present.

The Panel noted commentary regarding the workload of the Deputy Mayor and recommended a 30% increase for the Deputy Mayor from 2021/22.

Mr Cam thanked the other Panel members for their attendance and consideration of the matters at hand and thanked the officers for their work and advice.
