

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL	COUNCIL	18 OCTOBER 2021	10
INDEPENDENT PERSONS ALLOWANCES			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

A joint meeting of the Fylde and Blackpool Independent Remuneration Panels was held, on 15 September, to consider the allowances of the Standards Independent Persons. The three Independent Persons (IP's) serve both Fylde and Blackpool Council with respect to standards matters and the handling of allegations of elected member misconduct.

At the joint Independent Remuneration Panel, panel members were supplied with details of the responsibilities of an Independent Person and information on the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life into the role, to assist them in their deliberations.

RECOMMENDATION

That the allowance for the Independent Persons be set at £950 per annum, with effect from 1 December 2021, with an annual uplift applied thereafter in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI) with effect from 1 April 2022.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

A decision on the considering the level of remuneration of the IP's was previously deferred in 2019 with a view to considering the matter further when the government provided its response to the review of standards in public life. However, due to the pandemic no response has been provided and there is no indication from government when, or if, the recommendations will be reviewed. Considering this it is now felt timely not to postpone this matter further.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	✓
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	✓
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	✓
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	✓

REPORT

1. Fylde Borough Council and Blackpool Council have shared arrangements in relation to the standards framework and have adopted substantially the same Code of Conduct for 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.
2. The Independent Persons at Fylde and Blackpool currently receive an allowance payment of £800 per year which was agreed in 2019 and the cost is shared 50/50 between both authorities (i.e. £400 per authority). That allowance is not currently updated annually and has not received an uplift since 2019.
3. As a part of its deliberations, the joint Independent Remuneration Panel considered evidence during its considerations that indicated that that role of the Independent Person (IPs) had increased in importance and stature since the Panel last considered the remuneration for the position. In particular through the best practice recommendations which the Committee on Standards in Public Life had asked all councils to implement, included an enhanced role for the Independent Person, which results in more conferrals than in the past. This was also reinforced by both councils adopting a revised Complaints Handling Procedure for elected member complaints embedding that role in December 2019. The IPs are relied upon to be flexible and provide advice and support to the Monitoring Officers of both authorities at short notice using their experience and expertise. The role of the IP can vary significantly from attending meetings to observing practice, reviewing footage and is a growing and expanding role. The Panel considered an overview of the level of complaints at each authority an IP may be asked to become involved in. It was also noted that when a complaint went to a hearing, the details of the IP would be included on the decision notice when published indicating their significant role in the complaint's procedure.
4. Considering all the information provided to the Panel, it was felt that the current level of remuneration was not reflective of the weight of the role and therefore the Panel recommended an increase to £950 per annum to which the annual uplift should apply each year thereafter with effect from 1 April 2022 in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI). The annual uplift should automatically apply to this allowance going forward from that date.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	This would result in a budget increase of £90 for Fylde's proportion of the increased allowance in terms of the 2021/22 budget which can be dealt with by way of budget rightsizing
Legal	Each council must have an Independent Remuneration Panel which examines allowances and members must consider its recommendations
Community Safety	NA
Human Rights and Equalities	NA
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	NA
Health & Safety and Risk Management	NA

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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection