

Scheme of Members' Allowances 2014 Report

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Cheshire East



November 2014

Content

	Page(s)
Foreword by Chairman of Independent Remuneration Panel	3
Section 1: Implementation of 2013 review	4
Section 2: Job Descriptions for Elected Members	5
Section 3: The Next Independent Remuneration Panel	6
Appendix 1: Table of 2013 recommendations and responses	7-8

Foreword by the Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel

The panel welcomes the opportunity to maintain the continuity of the records of its' work by issuing a report this year.

We also appreciate the chance to record our approval of the positive changes that Cheshire East has made to the Scheme of Members' allowances this year.

This has been a strange year in Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) terms, as we have in the main been involved in supporting the implementation of one of our principle recommendations (See Section 2) and in contributing to the debate about the best way for us to hand over to our successors. Thus this report has not used the word review in its' title.

This will be the last report of the current panel, having been appointed for terms of three years; we are all due to step down from service on the panel in February 2015.

We thank those that have supported us over the three years, particularly those members who have shared their thoughts and concerns with us. We believe that we have made a positive contribution to both the Members' allowances scheme and to the electorates' understanding of it.

Janet Rushbrooke

Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel Cheshire East

Panel Members: Khumi Burton

Alan Edgeworth (to March 2014)

Robin Lord

Cynthia Speed

SECTION 1: IMPLEMENTATION OF 2013 REVIEW

The panel is a voluntary body. We receive a basic meeting allowance and can claim our transport costs for getting to meetings. There is no payment for any work done outside the meetings. With that as a background, as a panel we have found it hard sometimes to work in the adversarial environment of council debate.

We have had to learn some of the procedures and practices of working with elected members and council officers as we went along, which has not always contributed to smooth communications. This was particularly so with the issues we encountered getting our 2013 report to the Constitution Committee; we understand that the way in which it was finally presented to members gave them a less than ideal introduction to our recommendations; we also recognise the consequences of the reactions to those issues.

However, we are pleased that approximately 70% of our recommendations in the 2013 report were either accepted in full at the time or have been implemented in some form since. (See appendix 1)

When we took up service with the panel we struggled to understand how some of the sums currently in payment within the allowances scheme had been arrived at. We spent some time establishing methodologies for the allowances to enable easier updating and development in the future. We are disappointed that our recommendations with regard to the calculation of Basic allowance and to the banding of the Special Responsibility Allowances have not been accepted.

To read the 2013 report in full please visit:-

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/your_council/councillor_expenses.aspx

Under Reports of the Panel click the relevant link

SECTION 2 JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

The panel has consistently argued for job descriptions to be created for elected members. Special Responsibility Allowances are paid to certain elected members based on the member concerned having been asked to take up a specific post. It was clear to us during our discussions with elected members that there was a lack of consistency in approach between members who had taken up identically described posts. A job description not only gives a member considering taking up a post a clear understanding of what would be expected of them but it also serves to enable the party leaders to ensure that the expected work is being carried out by those in post.

We are pleased therefore that our Chairman has been able to take up an invitation from Councillor David Marren to contribute to the development of job descriptions for the Deputy Cabinet Member posts. The panel understands that full implementation of the job descriptions is imminent and looks forward to having confirmation of that.

Whilst it was good to start with developing job descriptions for the Deputy Cabinet member posts as they have been subject of much discussion; the panel trusts that the council will continue this work so that all members have a job description. The panel believes that a job description for the backbench members would assist in the recruitment of a wider range of members to the council.

SECTION 3 THE NEXT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

As has been mentioned in the Foreword, the current IRP members were appointed for a three year term which will come to an end in February 2015. This means that an entirely new panel would be appointed to start in February 2015.

As a panel we have learnt a great deal in the course of our time, not least about managing our interactions with both members and officers. It seems to us that it would be a waste for the current panel to take all their knowledge with them when they leave.

We are therefore pleased to have been invited to contribute to the debate about how this change of IRP can best be implemented and managed without the knowledge being lost in the process. We are delighted that the Council is taking an interest in our opinions in this matter.

This work is ongoing and we wish the incoming panel all the very best in their work and interactions with members and officers.

Opposition Group Deputy Leader allowance if Group numbers reduce to 20% of Council membership.	above). Retain existing allowance for Main Opposition Group Deputy Leader, so long as Group membership is x4 or more.
Removal of Minority Group Leader allowance if Group numbers reduce to 10% of Council membership.	Retain existing allowances for Minority Group Leaders, so long as Group membership is x4 or more.
4. Removal of allowances for Whips	Pending future review, retain the allowances for Administration Whip, Deputy Administration Whip and Opposition Whips.
5. Car mileage allowance: no change recommended	Introduce a recommended mileage rate of 45p per mile.
6. Members should inform officers when attendance at events is confirmed so that the lowest travel costs can be secured.	Panel's recommendation-agreed.
7. Current allowances for bicycles, car parking, motorcycles, taxis etc remain unchanged.	Panel's recommendation-agreed.
8. Minimal changes recommended to be made to subsistence allowances.	Panel's recommendations-agreed.
9. Small increase in overnight accommodation recommended.	Panel's recommendations-agreed.
10. Recommended separation of Dependents' Carers' Allowances into child care and adults/children with disabilities, and/or special needs. Recommended allowance limit of £4000 (child care) and £6000 adults/children.	Retain existing provisions for Dependents' Carers' Allowances.
11. Recommended that co-optees should be entitled to claim travel and subsistence allowances.	Panel's recommendations-agreed.
12. No change recommended to claims for out of pocket expenses.	Panel's recommendations-agreed.
13. No change recommended to claims for broadband	Panel's recommendations-agreed.