

The Recommendations of West Oxfordshire District Council's Independent Remuneration Panel of Members' Allowances for the Financial Year 2017/2018

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council is required under *The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021)* to appoint and maintain a Panel to advise on an annual basis the level of allowances payable to District Councillors. This Panel is independent of the Council and representative of the communities within the area that the local authority serves. The Council, before the beginning of each year must publish a scheme for the payment of a basic allowance for councillors and shall also make provision for special responsibility allowances, dependants' carers' allowance, travelling and subsistence, and payments to co-opted members. This scheme of Allowances was designed to ensure that the allowances were set at levels that fairly reflected the responsibilities and workload that members were required to undertake. Before the Council makes or amends the scheme they must have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Panel first commissioned in 2001, is made up of four members, Susan Corrigan, Janet Eustace, Margaret Watts and Michael Ryan (Chair). The Panel is grateful for the assistance given by Keith Butler, Head of Democratic Services in enabling the undertaking of this review.

A number of previous Panel reports and other information can be found by following the links from www.westoxon.gov.uk/councillors

The Panel met on 15 August 2016.

Preface to the Review Findings.

The Panel at its initial meeting in August 2016 found itself in the unusual position of noting that its recommendations for modest increases in Allowances for 2016/17 had been accepted by Council at its January meeting.

This, together with there being no changes to Council's structure or political balance, and no issues arising from last year's review that required particular consideration, made the task of carrying out the review relatively straightforward. This view was confirmed by the absence of any requests from Party leaders or Council members for the Panel to take account of any specific issues of concern in relation to the Scheme.

The Council staff pay award for 2016 saw the majority of staff receive a 1% increase, with a further 1% due in April 2017, and the recommendations in this report reflect a similar 2% increase, rounded.

Review Considerations and Recommendations for 2016/17

Basic Allowance

The Panel recommends that the Basic Allowance be increased in line with staff awards from £4500 to £4600, being approximately 2% when rounded up to a single figure, with effect from April 2017.

Special Responsibility Allowance

Special Responsibility Allowances recognise the additional responsibilities and workload undertaken by the Leader, his Deputy, and members of the Cabinet. The Panel recommends the same percentage increase as the Basic Allowance, again rounded to a simple figure. For a cabinet member this allowance would rise from £11250 to £11500.

The Panel continues to recommend that the restrictions for Members of the Cabinet to receive only one SRA, and for other councillors to be entitled to a maximum amount equivalent to a Cabinet allowance of £11500 should remain in place.

The SRA for a Councillor appointed to the Board of Cottsway Housing should continue to be linked to the remuneration of other Cottsway Board members.

This recommended percentage increase is carried through the other posts that receive a Special Responsibility Allowance and are as listed in the [schedule of recommended allowances](#) at the end of this report.

Travel, Subsistence and other Expenses

The Panel continues to recommend in relation to travel that the mileage rate is maintained at the Inland Revenue's non-profit making rate, currently 45p/mile. All other allowable travel claims to remain as currently set.

Claims for subsistence should remain as applicable to Local Authority staff.

Dependant Carers' Allowance.

The Panel continues to believe they are in line with similar allowances in other Councils and recommends no change for the coming year.

Co-opted Members' Allowances.

The Panel is of the opinion that there should be no changes to their level of allowance or payments.

In Conclusion

The Panel trusts the Council will find favour with these recommendations when the scheme is considered at its meeting in January 2017.

M. Ryan
Panel Chair

December 2016

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND SCHEDULE OF CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED BASIC AND SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES

Recommendations

The Panel recommends: (i) the payment of basic and special responsibility allowances as set out in the Table below; and (ii) that no other changes are made to the Council's Scheme of Allowances, meaning that mileage for approved duties will remain at the Inland Revenue non-profit rate, currently 45p per mile; subsistence will remain at the rate for Council Staff; and no change in relation to allowances for Dependant Carers and co-optees.

Table of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances

POSITION	CURRENT	PROPOSED	TOTAL (inc BASIC)
Basic Allowance (all members)	£4,500	£4,600	
Leader of Council	£20,250	£20,700	£25,300
Deputy Leader	£13,500	£13,800	£18,400
Cabinet Member	£11,250	£11,500	£16,100
Chairman of Council	£4,500	£4,600	£9,200
Chairmen of O&S Committees	£4,500	£4,500	£9,000
Chairmen of Area Planning Sub-Committees	£5,625	£5,750	£10,350
Chairman of HR Committee	£1,125	£1,150	£5,750
Chairman of Development Control Committee	£1,125	£1,150	£5,750
Chairman of Licensing Committee	£1,125	£1,150	£5,750
Chairman of Audit & GP Committee	£1,125	£1,150	£5,750
Chairman of Misc. Licensing Committee	£516	£575	£5,175
Opposition Group Leader	£1,125 *	£1,150	£5,750
Councillor appointed to the Board of Cottsway Housing	£2,250	£2,250 **	£6,850

* currently there are two opposition groups, each with four members. The SRA increases when there are six, 11, 16 etc members in the Group concerned.

** the actual recommended amount is 60% of that paid by Cottsway to other Board Members, which is currently £3,750 pa. It is not currently known whether this will change in 2017/18.