

Recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel following the creation of a minority administration

1 Background

- 1.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel met on 17 May 2013 to consider the payment of Special Responsibility Allowances to Political Group Spokespersons.
- 1.2 The Panel recognises that the Council needs to adopt a new approach following the May 2013 election. For a minority administration to be effective, new ways of working need to be developed which reflect the increased involvement of opposition group members. The role of opposition Group Spokespersons to work with each of the Cabinet members is recognised as being a possible part of this new approach.
- 1.3 Under the previous Council, Special Responsibility Allowances were paid to Cabinet project champions to provide support to Cabinet members on important issues facing the Council. The Cabinet project champions were drawn from the majority party and reflected key work in areas such as waste, education/links to business and highways. With greater cross party working this type of approach in the view of the Panel is less likely to be effective in future.

2 Financial implications

- 2.1 Strictly speaking the Independent Remuneration Panel should not consider the financial implications of its recommendations. Panel members, however, are anxious that their recommendations do not place any increased financial burden on the Council when it is looking to make significant savings year on year. The Panel believes that it would be reasonable to offer an allowance of £1,500 to each of the opposition Political Group Spokespersons. There are seven Cabinet portfolios so there would be seven political spokespersons for the Liberal Democrat Group and a further seven spokespersons for the Labour Group. The total cost would amount to £21,000 and this would be covered by the savings achieved in allowances following the May 2013 election.
- 2.2 To summarise, the following savings have already been achieved:

Saving in Basic Allowance arising from the reduction in the number of councillors from 63 to 53	£88,000
Reduction in the number of scrutiny committees from six to four – saving of two Special Responsibility Allowances	£11,616
Disbandment of the Corporate Parenting Committee – saving of one Special Responsibility Allowance	£5,808
Total	£105,424

- 2.3 £105,424 is a significant saving in the cost of councillors. In addition, £20,329 was available to pay Cabinet project champions in 2012-13 and the Panel understands that only one champion will be paid an allowance in 2013-14. This will be to reflect a detailed piece of work relating to the new highways contract. The level of allowance will be £4,066 for 2013-14 and should then cease.
- 2.4 If Political Group Spokespersons are paid at the suggested level, the total saving on the cost of councillors will still amount to more than £100,000 in a full financial year.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That the Council pay a Special Responsibility Allowance of £1,500 to each of the Political Group Spokespersons. This should be reviewed towards the end of 2013 to ensure that the allowance reflects the success or otherwise of the new arrangements. In depth interviews with all or some of these spokespersons will be undertaken later this year.
- 3.2 That the Council should not pay any Special Responsibility Allowances to Cabinet project champions beyond the end of the 2013-14 financial year.
- 3.3 That in line with the current allowance scheme, each councillor should only be entitled to receive one Special Responsibility Allowance.
- 3.4 The Independent Remuneration Panel recognise, however, that the current political make-up of the Council may mean that it does not wish to apply this condition (3.3) to the payment of Special Responsibility Allowances for Political Group Spokespersons. This will be an issue for the Council to determine.

William Alexander
Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel

22 April 2013