

# REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

DECEMBER 2014

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been produced by an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) made up of members drawn from the local community. The Panel is independent of the Council and its role is to make recommendations on the level of allowances paid to councillors. The object being to promote access to all in our diverse community who may wish to stand for election to serve that community via the democratic process.

1.2 The members of the Panel:

- Richard Blamey      Former Pensions Manager with a large multi-national industrial gas company. Currently a Pensions Consultant and trustee, also serves as treasurer and member of his local parish council.
- Philip Lowery      A former adviser to the Social Services Committee. Member of the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) of the Criminal Justice Board.
- Fiona Miles      Former Clinical Nurse Specialist in Respiratory Medicine. Former Treasurer and Secretary to play groups and the Royal College of Nursing Specialist Group. Trustee of Gloucestershire Chest Fund. Also a parish councillor, school governor and involved in Gloucestershire Girl Guiding and the RSPB.
- Gwyn Morgan      Former Head of Science at a Gloucestershire Secondary School. Broad experience of the education system as a teacher and a school governor. Custody Visitor with high level security clearance.
- Quentin Tallon      Former Secretary of Cheltenham and District TUC with broad experience of trade union and other negotiations. Involvement with the voluntary sector.

1.3 The members of the Panel would like to place on record their thanks to William Alexander who stood down from the Panel after more than 10 years' service. William was Chairman of the Panel for most of that time and he has played a significant role in the development of the current allowances scheme.

1.4 The Panel's recommendations relate to the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and are in keeping with the following statutory provisions:

1.4.1 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Local Government Act 2006

1.4.2 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 ('The Allowances Regulations')

## **2. Review process**

2.1 The Panel met on 24 April, 16 October and 4 December 2014. Interviews with 22 councillors were conducted on 6, 8 and 10 October 2014. Members were asked about their roles both at the Council and within their communities. They were also invited to give their views on the current allowances scheme. Considerable help was given to the Panel by the willingness of members to be open and frank with their responses to questioning.

2.2 The Panel recognises the value of the commitment of all County Councillors to the people of Gloucestershire and congratulate them on their untiring efforts in this cause.

2.3 The Panel recognises the support given to councillors by the Democratic Services Team and the value of an ongoing member development programme to help members understand their roles and responsibilities.

## **3. Allowances**

3.1 In their January 2014 report, the Panel members made clear that the appropriate rate for the Basic Allowance should at least be £10,000. One year on, this remains our view and we maintain that the current Basic Allowance of £9,000 undervalues the role of our County Councillors. The Panel recognise, however, that the severe financial constraints being faced by local authorities means that achieving the target of £10,000 will be difficult in the short-term.

- 3.2 After much consideration, Panel members are recommending an increase in the Basic Allowance from £9,000 to £9,150 for 2015-16. This is a majority view, with one Panel member feeling strongly that the allowance should be set at a higher figure in order to ensure progress is made towards reaching the £10,000 goal. The Panel as a whole has sympathy with this view but felt it necessary to curtail these aspirations again this year in light of the ongoing austerity measures.
- 3.3 The Panel believe that the principle of using the Basic Allowance as a 'building block' for the Special Responsibility Allowances should not be lost. The only exceptions are the Political Group Leaders and the Political Group Spokespersons or 'Shadows' where fixed figures are recommended based on the 2014-15 allowances. The level of these allowances will be reviewed annually by the Panel.
- 3.4 The Panel will continue to consider all matters impinging on allowances during 2015-16 being mindful that the level of Basic Allowance remains low. It is important in the longer term that allowances are set at a level so as not to discourage people from standing for election.

#### **4. Recommendations**

##### **4.1 Basic Allowance**

To increase the Basic Allowance from £9,000 to £9,150 from 1 April 2015.

##### **4.2 Special Responsibility Allowances**

To adopt the Special Responsibility Allowances shown at Appendix A.

**Richard Blamey**

**Chairman**

**Independent Remuneration Panel for Gloucestershire County Council**