

# Independent Remuneration Panel

## Constitution Committee – 17 January 2022

### 1 Introduction

1.1 This report has been produced by the 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 head of pensions with a large multi-national industrial gas company. Currently a pensions' trustee and appointed chair of the Tewkesbury IRP. Also serves as treasurer and member of his local parish council.
  
- Philip Lowery      Former adviser to the Social Services Committee. Member of the Independent Advisory Group to the Gloucestershire Constabulary.
  
- Fiona Miles      Former Clinical Nurse Specialist in Respiratory Medicine. Involved in Gloucestershire Girl Guiding and a parish councillor.
  
- Quentin Tallon      Former Secretary of Cheltenham and District TUC. Involved with the voluntary sector.

1.3 The IRP's recommendations are in accordance with the following statutory provisions:

1.3.1 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Local Government Act 2006

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

## **2 Review process**

- 2.1 Interviews were held with councillors during the Autumn 2021, a number of which took place virtually from Shire Hall. The virtual meetings were not a success and were not helped by technical issues. The Panel wish to stress the value of face-to-face meetings.
- 2.2 The interviews provided an insight into the work of councillors and a number of new members took the opportunity to tell the panel about their initial experiences.
- 2.3 It remains evident from the interviews that there is a strong sense of commitment to their local communities amongst both returning and new county councillors in Gloucestershire.
- 2.4 IRP members greatly appreciate the work that Richard Blamey, chair of the panel, does in leading the Panel and have requested that this is formally recorded. They also would like to thank the staff from Democratic Services for the support they provide to the Panel including the research relating to other local authority schemes.

## **3 Allowances**

- 3.1 No recommendations were made for increases in allowances for the 2021-22 financial year as we were mindful that any proposed increase was likely to be contentious in an election year.
- 3.2 The current allowances are shown at Appendix A
- 3.3 At the request of the Panel, Democratic Services undertook a review of allowance schemes for all county councils in England. Basic allowances have increased over the last few years with a median basic allowance of £11,210 across county councils. Although there is much variation, our current rates of Special Responsibility Allowance are in line with other county councils.
- 3.4 In previous years the increase in allowances has broadly been based on the staff pay settlement for the previous year but this has still to be agreed for 2021-22.
- 3.5 The IRP is mindful of the financial hardship that some residents have suffered through the Covid-19 pandemic. We believe, however, that it is important that the Council does not fall too far behind the level of other local authorities. We propose that the Basic Allowance is increased by £250 to £10,750 and that the SRA's are maintained at their current levels.

- 3.6 We are not supportive of automatic increases each year as we believe that it is important to assess the level of allowances to reflect the latest position at the Council. There would also be delays in implementing increases as annual staff pay rises are often subject to protracted negotiations which result in increases being backdated over a number of months.
- 3.7 A number of councillors are using bicycles to travel to meetings and to recognise this, and encourage more councillors to do the same, we believe that a cycling allowance should be introduced at an equivalent rate to the mileage rate for cars. The overall number of miles travelled by bicycle will be relatively low so the additional cost is insignificant.
- 3.8 In terms of travelling, we are aware that some councillors have to travel long distances within their divisions to meet with GCC officers to look at a particular issue of concern. While the cost of travelling to see constituents is included within the Basic Allowance, we believe that councillors should be able to claim travelling costs when they are meeting with a GCC officer. We understand and support a pragmatic approach is being taken by Democratic Services.
- 3.9 Some members appear to be unaware that they can donate their allowance to a charitable organisation as part of the Gift Aid provisions. If there are any members who wish to do this then they should contact Democratic Services who will be able to make the necessary arrangements with GCC Payroll.
- 3.10 We understand that the Council is currently going through a major ICT transformation which should address the ICT issues that some members referred to during the interviews. It is pleasing to note that new councillors were particularly complimentary about how they had been welcomed at the Council and the helpfulness of officers.

#### **4 Recommendations for the 2022-23 financial year**

- 4.1 To increase the Basic Allowance from £10,500 to £10,750
- 4.2 To maintain Special Responsibility Allowances at their current level
- 4.3 To include a cycling travel allowance at the same rate as car mileage
- 4.4 To note the revised Members' Allowances Scheme for 2021-22 at Appendix B to the report.

**Richard Blamey**

**Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Gloucestershire County Council**

**Current allowances for 2021-22**

Basic Allowance payable to all 53 members: £10,500

<b>Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)</b>	<b>Positions</b>	<b>Allowance</b>
Leader of the Council	1	£34,170
Group leader with 5 or more members (not Leader of the Council)	2	£ 6,360
Group leader with less than 5 members (0.2 per group member – min 2 members)	1	£ 5,088
Cabinet member	9	£19,130
Scrutiny chair	7	£ 6,360
Audit and Governance Committee chair	1	£ 6,360
Planning Committee chair	1	£ 6,360
Pensions Committee chair	1	£ 6,360
Chair of Council	1	£ 9,570
Vice-chair of Council	1	£ 2,860
Fostering Panel member	2	£ 5,730

## APPENDIX B

### Proposed allowances for 2022-23

Basic Allowance payable to all 53 members: £10,750

<b>Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)</b>	<b>Positions</b>	<b>Allowance</b>
Leader of the Council	1	£34,170
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