

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL
IN RESPECT OF ALLOWANCES PAID TO MEMBERS OF
CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL
2009-10

THE PANEL

The Panel, which is appointed to make recommendations to the Council in respect of the allowances paid to members of the Council, comprises the following members:

Mr R. Gillespie
Mr R Kinton
Ms C McLaughlin
Mr R. Mellar (Chair)

REMIT

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require, among other things, the Council to have regard to the recommendations of an Independent Panel in agreeing allowances paid to councillors.

Those regulations require the Panel to produce a report making recommendations as to:

- the amount of basic allowance;
- whether special responsibility allowances should be received and, if so, the duties to which they should apply and the amounts of those allowances;
- whether an allowance relating to the expense of arranging for the care of children or dependents should be available (carers' allowance) and, if so, the amount of that allowance;
- whether travelling and subsistence allowances should be available and, if so, the duties for which they should be payable and the amounts of those allowances;
- whether a basic allowance should be paid to co-opted members and, if so, the amount of that allowance.

REPORT

This is the Independent Panel's report of its review of members' allowances for 2009-10. This report has been compiled and agreed by members of the Panel following a number of meetings held during the Autumn and Winter

2008. The Head of Democratic Services attended the meetings to assist the Panel in the consideration of these matters.

Allowances Generally

Some time ago, the Panel devised a formula for the payment of allowances and had regard to comparison data from peer authorities. Since then, the Panel has adjusted allowances appropriately and is satisfied with the current level of members' allowances for Charnwood Borough Council, some of which are the highest in Leicestershire. On this occasion, however, it recommends that the majority of allowances for 2009-10 not be increased for the following reasons:-

1. The Council's current financial position does not allow for an increase in members' allowances;
2. In the current economic climate, the council tax payers would not expect there to be an increase in members' allowances; and
3. There is a need to remunerate the new Chair of the Audit Committee and there will be a cost associated with travel and subsistence claims for meetings of this new Committee.

New Audit Committee

In November 2008, the Council agreed to the establishment of a new Audit Committee. As a result, the Panel recommends that

1. The Chair of the Audit Committee be paid at a rate of 0.70 x basic allowance (£3,341). For the moment, it is recommended that there not be an allowance paid to the Vice-Chair.
2. The Council makes budget provision for this allowance in its 2009-10 budget.

Payment of Multiple Special Responsibility Allowances

The Panel believes that best practice discourages the full payment of multiple Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) and it gave notice a year ago that, during its review for 2009-10, it would recommend changes in this respect. However, rather than recommending that only one allowance can be claimed, it recommends that in the case of any councillor receiving more than one SRA, the highest allowance be paid at 100% and the other(s) be paid at 50%.

Main Opposition Group Leaders' Allowance

Following representations made by the Main Opposition Leader as to his workload in comparison with his other role as Chair of the Scrutiny Commission, the Panel wishes make a change. It is recommending that the SRA paid to the Main Opposition Group Leader be increased from £2,386 to £4,000 (an increase of £1,614). However, this councillor also receives an allowance for being Chair of the Scrutiny Commission which will now be paid at £1,670 (i.e. 50% of £3,341 - a decrease of £1,670). This proposal will therefore be cost neutral but addresses the contention that there is a higher

workload in being Main Opposition Group Leader than being Chair of Scrutiny Commission.

Vice-Chair of Plans Committee

The Panel has been conscious that no special responsibility allowance has been paid in the past to Vice-Chairs of Plans 1 and Plans 2 Committees. With the proposal to combine Plans 1 and Plans 2 into one committee, the Panel wishes to address the issue of special responsibility allowance for the Vice-Chair. It is proposing therefore that, from the start of the 2009-10 Municipal Year, a special responsibility allowance of £1,432 be paid to the Vice-Chair of the new combined Plans Committee.

Travel and Subsistence Allowances

Some time ago, the Panel aligned the travel and subsistence rates paid to members to that of staff. The revised rates are specified in the attached scheme and are recommended for approval.

Changes to the Council's Scheme of Members' Allowances

The Panel has again reviewed the Council's Scheme of Members' Allowances and incorporates the proposals in this report. A revised copy of which is attached to this report for approval.

Consultation

The Panel met with the political Group Leaders and gave them the opportunity to comment on its draft proposals before finalising this report.

Recommendations in Summary

1. That, with the exception of the Main Opposition Group Leader, the basic and special responsibility allowances for 2009-10 not be increased;
2. That the special responsibility allowance for the Main Opposition Group Leader be increased from £2,386 to £4,000;
3. That the Chair of the Audit Committee be paid at a rate of 0.70 x basic allowance (£3,341) and that the Council makes budget provision for this allowance in its 2009-10 budget;
4. That a special responsibility allowance of £1,432 be paid to the Vice-Chair of the new combined Plans Committee, should this be established;
5. That in the case of any councillor receiving more than one SRA, the highest allowance be paid at 100% and the other(s) be paid at 50%;
6. That the travel and subsistence rates be revised as per the corresponding officer rates;
7. That the revised Scheme of Members' Allowances be approved.