

Report of	Meeting	Date
Independent Remuneration Panel Introduced by (Executive Member (Economic Development and Public Service Reform))	Council	Tuesday, 28 January 2025

Review of Members' Allowances Scheme

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	Not applicable
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Purpose of the Report

1. To consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel to the Council in relation to Members' Allowances.

Recommendations

2. That the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme be noted.
3. That Member Support Working Group be requested to produce information for members, including tips on work / life balance and dealing with social media. This could then be shared on the members portal.
4. Information about the Dependant carers allowance and expenses and how to claim them to be highlighted via the members portal on a quarterly basis.
5. That an explanatory note be added to the annual notice moving forward, setting out information about the role of a Councillor, that some members live in rural areas, use public transport or have disabilities meaning they require assistance with travel. The allowance also remunerated for wear and tear on vehicles.

Reasons for recommendations

6. The recommendations are based on feedback from members or are required to facilitate the operation of the members allowances scheme.

Other options considered and rejected

7. Not to take the feedback into consideration.

Corporate priorities

8. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Housing where residents can live well	A green and sustainable borough
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe and engaged communities

Background to the report

9. The current Members' allowance Scheme was agreed in 2021 and the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 state that schemes should be reviewed as a minimum every four years.
10. Councillors are not required to agree with Independent Remuneration Panel recommendations, just take them into account.

Statutory requirements

11. Allowances can only be paid to Members of local authorities in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, as amended by the Local Government Act 2000 and supplemented by the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.
12. These statutory provisions require local authorities to make a formal Scheme of Allowances for their Members and to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations to Councils about their Schemes. The Council is required to have regard to recommendations that have been made by its Independent Remuneration Panel.
13. The Regulations state that each Authority must make a Scheme which includes a Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) for special responsibilities. The current Scheme includes a schedule of allowances which Chorley Council pays to its Elected Members.
14. A scheme may also provide for:
 - Dependants' carers' allowance
 - Travelling and subsistence allowance
 - Co-optees' allowance
 - Pensions

Independent Remuneration Panel

15. The current Panel are Dennis Benson, Lorraine Norris, Diane Gradwell and Phil Davies.

Information considered

16. As part of the review the Panel reviewed the following documents
 - Calendar of meetings
 - Member Development programme
 - List of approved duties
 - Latest annual notice of allowances claimed
 - The number of members who claimed expenses broken down into newly elected and long serving Councillors

Comparative information

17. The allowances at Chorley were comparable with those of other Lancashire authorities, which was reassuring that they were at a reasonable and comparable rate.
18. Each authority organised itself differently and we noted the range of roles and variances in payments.

Survey of members

19. 33 out of 42 Councillors had completed a survey about the scheme. The overall impression was that members were content with the scheme.
20. It was pleasing to see comments that the allowance was not a motivating factor in people becoming a councillor. The motivation was to help the community, rather than financial.

Feedback from the Executive Leader, the Leader of the Opposition and a back bencher

21. A number of suggestions were made during the feedback sessions.
22. **Transparency regarding roles within the scheme.** It was noted that there were role descriptions for Executive Members and Deputy Portfolio Holders in the Constitution.
23. **Could there be a cap on the number of hours undertaken in the Councillor role?** This was not considered workable. Some members choose to spend more time than others – each member made the role their own.
24. It was suggested that information be produced for members, including tips on work / life balance, dealing with social media and shared on the members portal. The member support working group would be the appropriate body to lead on this.
25. **What additional benefits could be available to members?** Such as discounted council gym membership or flower show tickets?
26. This was not considered appropriate. Members were not employees and not entitled to access benefits such as discounted gym membership. There were early bird offers on some Council run events, including the Flower Show.
27. **Not all members claim mileage.** Tension was noted between those members who did and did not claim. Information was supplied at Induction and on the member's portal on a quarterly basis.
28. The requirement to publish an annual notice of allowances paid to members had, historically, been picked up by the press. This had caused some members to choose not to claim expenses.
29. It was suggested that an explanatory note be added to the notice moving forward, setting out information about the role of a Councillor, that some members live in rural areas, use public transport or have disabilities meaning they require assistance with travel. The allowance also remunerated for wear and tear on vehicles.

30. **Members receive a one-off payment towards their mobile phone costs.** A data package was given currently with the council issued iPad, but some members were now choosing to use their own device, rather than carry around the iPad.
31. Following a query as to what other authorities provide seven out of twelve responded, five only receive an iPad (or smart phone). Two offer phones to Leaders / Exec Members. Members have direct dial numbers when using Teams, so the suggestion of a one-off payment was not supported.
32. **Dependant carers allowance.** There is an option to claim a Dependant carers allowance, but this has never been utilised.
33. Information about the allowance and how to claim it could be highlighted via the members portal on a quarterly basis.
34. **Rate for electric vehicles.** It was been confirmed that the rate for fully electric vehicles was 45p per mile for fully electric vehicles. This was the HMRC rate for vehicle mileage.

Climate change and air quality

35. The work noted in this report has a neutral impact on the council's carbon emissions and the wider climate emergency and sustainability targets of the council.

Equality and diversity

36. It is really important that members in reflect the population they represent. There is currently more of a balance of male and female Councillors, which is really positive. There are also younger Councillors.
37. The survey undertaken showed that the allowance was not a motivating factor in them becoming a councillor. The motivation was to help the community, rather than financial.
38. The role of Councillor should not be financially detrimental. There is a need to be aware of the current cost of living crisis.

Risk

39. The council needs to take account of the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel when determining the Members Allowances Scheme.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

40. There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations made in this report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

41. The appropriate level of expenses allowances and benefits due to members is at the discretion of council, and must be reasonable and evidence driven. Further, the views of the Independent Remuneration Panel must be taken into account. The distinction

relating to the nonemployee status of councillors is important in coming to conclusions particularly in relation to benefits.

42. It also needs to be recognised that the members allowance is to cover core expenses and the council by providing means and equipment to councillors are providing funded avenues for discharging their functions.

Dennis Benson
Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel

Background documents

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

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