

Report of	Meeting	Date
Chief Executive	Council	17 September 2013

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To make recommendations to Council from the Independent Remuneration Panel about the Members' Allowances Scheme and some consequential changes required to the Constitution.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the following changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme be agreed:

- An allowance be payable to the Vice-Chair of Governance Committee of £50 (per half day), only applicable when chairing the meeting due to the absence of the Chair.
- Members start using the electronic claim system (rather than the paper based system) in line with staff from 1 November 2013 and in doing so, the scheme be revised to include a provision for the shortest journey route to be claimed.
- The approved duties list be revised so that Members may claim travel for those meetings where they are appointed as a formal member; where they are attending as a nominated substitute member; or are attending Executive Cabinet. All other meetings, whether acting as an observer or speaking as a ward Councillor, to be outside the scheme and therefore not eligible for travel expenses.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all		A strong local economy	
Clean, safe and healthy communities		An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	✓

BACKGROUND

- In line with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 the Council is required to request the Independent Remuneration Panel make recommendations on any changes to the Members Allowances Scheme for determination by a full Council meeting.

7. The Independent Remuneration Panel met on 2 September 2013 to consider two items and this report contains their recommendations. The Council do not necessarily need to accept their findings as long as they have given them appropriate consideration.

VICE-CHAIR OF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

8. The Executive Leader of the Council requested the Panel consider whether an allowance should be payable to the Vice-Chair of Governance Committee, and if an allowance should be payable, the amount of that allowance. The request came as a result of representations he received.
9. The Governance Committee meets four times a year to consider audit activity and has an overview of the Council's constitution in respect of contract procedure rules, financial regulations and codes of conduct and behaviour. It also receives, hears and makes decisions on standards complaints following investigation.
10. The Panel considered comparative information with other Council positions. Within the current Scheme at Chorley several Vice-Chairs receive a payment. The Development Control Committee meets 13 times a year and is a quasi-judicial function. The Chair and Vice also meet regularly to determine planning applications under delegated powers.
11. The Licensing and Safety Committee meets four times a year, and have fourteen scheduled sub-committees to consider applications for Premises Licenses, Hackney Carriage Licenses etc. The Chair and Vice-Chair take turns at chairing the sub-committees. Licensing is a quasi-judicial function. The Chair and Vice also meets taxi drivers at regularly Licensing Liaison meetings.
12. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meets four times a year and the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel meets four times a year with the Chair and Vice-Chair undertaking that role for both Committees. The expectation is that the Chair and Vice-Chair will also get involved in Scrutiny review task groups.
13. The Panel noted that the Vice-Chair of Governance does not have any additional duties, other than to chair meetings in the absence of the Chair and attend Committee briefings.
14. The Panel also considered the comparative information with other Councils and noted that Chorley Council are the only district to have merged the Audit Committee and the Standards Committee to form a Governance Committee.
15. This makes comparison with other Councils slightly more difficult, although for the Audit Committee the majority of authorities only pay the Chair and for the Standards Committee some authorities pay the Chair and some don't. Only one district pays the Vice-Chair. One other authority pays the Vice-Chair a day rate which is only applicable when chairing the meeting due to the absence of the Chair.

MEMBERS TRAVEL

16. The Panel observed that the current Travel Scheme forms part of the Members Allowances Scheme and has remained largely unchanged since its original introduction. The rates paid are uprated in line with the increases agreed nationally for employees.
17. At the current time Councillors claim travel using a paper based system. Staff use an electronic claim system and the proposal is that Members should be moved to this system as a more efficient means of processing claims.

18. The Panel agreed that as the Council moves towards increasing technology to create efficiencies and to paperless meetings using tablet PCs, the proposal fits with the overall culture within the organisation and has prompted consideration of the travel scheme and whether it remains fit for purpose.
19. The system automatically calculates the shortest route for the journey and amount that can be claimed. The Panel noted that the current scheme does not stipulate that Members should take the shortest route for a journey but it is proposed that this be included along with the need to use the electronic system in order to make a claim. Members will be given training on using the system.

APPROVED DUTIES

20. The list of approved duties includes the ability to claim travel expenses for all formal meetings attended – irrespective of whether a Councillor is a Member (or a named substitute Member) of that Committee. However, the Panel noted the current scheme generally includes a provision that travel expenses cannot be claimed for ward duties.
21. Attendance at Executive Cabinet as the Council's major decision making body is encouraged; however attendance at other meetings (particularly Licensing and Development Control Committees) as observers is generally due to ward interest.
22. Whilst the scheme is being reviewed it is appropriate for it to be tightened up for Members to claim travel for those meetings where they are a formal member; are attending as a nominated substitute; or are attending Executive Cabinet. Members will still be able to claim for attendance at outside bodies where they are the Council's representative and for member development sessions, both internally and externally. Attendance as an observer or to represent ward interests at other Council meetings will be outside the scheme and therefore met from the Councillors basic allowance.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

23. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	✓	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	✓	Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

24. It is difficult to assess the financial impact of the proposals however, whatever the impact is it is likely to be very small, and as such, unlikely to be material. Once the implications can be modelled budgets may be adjusted accordingly.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

25. The recommendations are in accordance with the Regulations.

GARY HALL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Background Papers

Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
Members Allowances Scheme	December 2012	Website	http://chorley.gov.uk/Documents/Democratic%20Services/Information/Appendix%209%20(Members%20Allowances%20Scheme)%20v1.pdf

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Ruth Rimmington	5118	2 September 2013	Independent Remuneration Panel