

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Independent Members' Remuneration Panel** held in the O'Connor Room Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Monday 9 November 2015 from 6.00pm to 6.30pm.

Present: Mr Alan Warner (Local Resident) (Chairman)
Ms Unni Parsons (Local Resident)
Mr Glyn Rees (Local Resident)
Ms Audrey De Costa (Local Resident)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Panel at its meeting on 10 November 2014 recommended to the Council the level of Members' allowances for 2015/16 as follows:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:-

1. The basic allowance is increased by 1% from £4,581 per annum to £4,627.
2. That the Special Responsibility Allowances be as follows:

Leader of the Council £9,254 (2 x Basic rate)

Lead Members £4,627 (1 x Basic rate)

Chair of Planning Committee £3,470 (3/4 of basic rate)

Chair of Licensing Committee & Regulatory Services Committee £2,313 (half of basic rate)

Chair of Audit Committee £2,313 (half of basic rate)

Group Leaders:

Main Opposition Leader £3,085 (2/3 of basic rate)

Other Opposition Leader(s) to be provided with a proportion of £3,085 in relation to the number of seats the party has on the Council.

1.2 These recommendations were not agreed by the Council at its meeting on 25 November 2014 for 2015/16. A copy of the Minute and decision from this meeting is provided below:

CL55/14 INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Council considered the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel. (IRP)

Councillor Matthew Bedford, seconded by Councillor Ann Shaw, moved an amendment to the motion that the Members allowances remain unchanged and the 1% increase not be accepted.

Councillor Stephen Cox was not prepared to accept the recommendation as he recalled that last year Council had been advised to accept the recommendations from the IRP but this year Council were being asked to consider an amendment to the recommendations.

On being put to Council, the Chairman declared the Motion was CARRIED the voting being 29 For, 0 Against and 5 Abstentions.

RESOLVED:-

1. That the basic allowance remain unchanged at £4,581 per annum
2. That the Special Responsibility Allowances be as follows:

Leader of the Council	£9,162 (2 x Basic rate)
Lead Members	£4,581 (1 x Basic rate)
Chair of Planning Committee	£3,436 (3/4 of basic rate)
Chair of Licensing Committee & Regulatory Services Committee	£2,290 (half of basic rate)
Chair of Audit Committee	£2,290 (half of basic rate)
Group Leaders:	
Main Opposition Leader	£3,054 (2/3 of basic rate)

Other Opposition Leader(s) to be provided with a proportion of £3,054 in relation to the number of seats the party has on the Council.

2. CONSIDERATION OF EXISTING ALLOWANCES

The Panel considered the following factors in relation to the recommendation it would make to Council in respect of Members' Allowances and the Special Responsibility Allowances for 2016/17:

- Minute CL55/14 (Council 25 November 2014) where discussion had taken place regarding the reduction in allowance to the Minority Group Leader;
- Background information on the Council's Governance arrangements and how it was working in practice;
- The role of the Leader, Deputy Leader and Lead Members;
- Information on the Committee's responsibilities;
- An overview of the Three Rivers economy;
- Financial pressures on the Council in the coming year 2016/17 including budget savings which are required to be made by the Council in 2015/16.
- Current information on the Local Government Pay negotiations for employees and the proposal for a 1% pay increase for 2016/17.
- The level of Council Tax
- Business Rates
- Service Reviews
- Written representation from the Chief Executive on behalf of the three Group Leaders.

The Chairman gave a summary of where the Council were now, including the governance structure and the rejection of 1% increase last year.

The Panel were asked by the Chief Executive to review the basis of the allowances for the Opposition Leaders. Even though one of the Groups may only have 2-3 Members there was still a basic function to be carried out. For example, the Leader of the Labour Group, in order to fulfil the role, had to make themselves more available, as there were fewer Members in that Group.

The report contained useful information on the economy and how people were feeling.

The Panel then discussed the need to save money, given the Government announcement of a 30% reduction by 2020 in the DCLG (Communities and Local Government department) budget. Choices were becoming more difficult for the Council, shown by the recent considerations on reducing grass cutting, refuse collection and garden waste which residents were now noticing. It was recognised that the District Council was not financially in the same position as some northern authorities.

However, it was agreed that the Council did need to save money but Councillors had a more difficult job.

The Panel noted that:

- house prices in the area averaged at about half a million which was due to the ripple effect coming out of London.
- It was recognised that this was a challenging time for businesses.
- The South Oxhey redevelopment was now progressing.
- There had been no increase in Council Tax (District element) for some years.

Impact on Current Allowances

The Panel having considered all of the evidence and the submission by the Chief Executive proposed:

1. That the size of group should still influence the allowance paid., however
2. That £200 be paid to each Group Leader in recognition of the role they were playing
3. That in any event the allowance should not fall below £700 for any Group Leader.
4. That there should be a 1% increase to members allowances across the board.
5. On the remuneration for travel although it was quite high at 52.2p per mile (the Inland Revenue rate is 45p or 50p with passenger) not many Councillors claimed the allowance and the Panel agreed to recommend that the travel allowance remain at 52.2 per mile.

The Panel agreed that there should be no increase in the Dependent Carer Allowance of £12.50 per hour.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:-

1. The basic allowance is increased from £4,581 per annum to £4,627.
2. That the Special Responsibility Allowances be as follows:

Leader of the Council £9,254 (2 x Basic rate)

Lead Members £4,627 (1 x Basic rate)

Agenda Item 2

Chair of Planning Committee £3,470 (3/4 of basic rate)

Chair of Licensing Committee & Regulatory Services Committee £2,314 (half of basic rate)

Chair of Audit Committee £2,314 (half of basic rate)

Group Leaders:

Main Opposition Leader £3,085 (2/3 of basic rate)

Other Opposition Leader(s) to be provided with a proportion of £3,085 in relation to the number of seats the party has on the Council.

Group Leader allowance of £200 (for each of the three Group Leaders)

The minimum allowance for any Group Leader should be no less than £700

that the Travel Allowance remains at 52.2 per mile.

that there is no increase in the Dependent Carer Allowance of £12.50 per hour.

CHAIRMAN