

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

1. Introduction

The Council's constitution states that councillors are entitled to receive allowances as set out in the Members' Allowances Scheme. Amendments to the scheme can only be made following a report of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The current allowances scheme is based on a decision of Full Council in July 2014, following consideration of the recommendations in a report published by the panel in February 2014.

2. Legal Framework

In accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Local Government Act 2000, and associated regulations (namely The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended)), local authorities across the country have a duty to consider the findings of an independent remuneration panel before determining any scheme for payment of allowances to councillors of the authority.

The regulations place a statutory obligation on the Council to establish and maintain an independent remuneration panel to look at councillors' allowances and report its findings to the Council. Council has a statutory duty to have regard to the panel's recommendations before making or amending any councillors' allowances scheme.

3. The Council's Independent Remuneration Panel

The Independent Remuneration Panel first convened to undertake the current review on 15 October 2019. The panel members are John Richardson, Sally Ann Smith and Stuart Green. John Richardson has previously served as a member of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel.

4. Background Information

The Panel met on two occasions in October and November 2019, to consider issues relating to indexation, the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel allowance and a full review of the current Member Allowances Scheme.

The Panel was given an overview of the Council's structure, committees and member roles, together with background information on the current Member Allowances Scheme. The Panel was also aware of possible changes to the Council's Constitution from the municipal year beginning May 2020.

5. Methodology

In respect of a full review of the Member Allowances Scheme, the Panel have considered comparative information relating to other local authorities, including authorities both within and outside North Yorkshire. It was agreed that the full review would be delayed until the next year of the political term, to take into account any changes to Member roles and responsibilities.

In respect of the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel allowance, the Panel have considered the report to Policy and Resources Committee on 4 July 2019 and information relating to the Council's attendance record, changes to the quorum of meetings, and the positions of other North Yorkshire District Councils in relation to the resourcing of the Panel. The Panel also interviewed the Council's current and most recent previous representatives on the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel, and the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee. It was agreed at the meeting on 11 November 2019 that a recommendation relating to the payment of an allowance to the Council's representative on the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel would be reserved until such a time as the full review of the Member Allowances Scheme is undertaken in the new municipal year.

In respect of indexation, the Panel have considered the report to Policy and Resources Committee on 25 July 2019, the Council's current Member Allowances Scheme, Member Roles and Descriptions and comparative information relating to other local authorities, including authorities both within and outside North Yorkshire. The Panel made a recommendation regarding indexation at the meeting on 15 October 2019.

6. Indexation

The Panel was asked to review the index of staff pay used for the annual adjustment of Member allowances, introduced on 3 July 2014 when Full Council agreed the current Member allowances arrangements. This was overdue for review and is a matter of legal compliance.

In considering the matter of indexation, the Panel was mindful that a full review of the Member Allowances Scheme would be undertaken in the next municipal year and that this may take into consideration changes to Member roles and responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATION

The Panel recommends the continuance of the index to staff pay for the annual adjustment of Member allowances until such a time as a full review of the Member Allowances Scheme has taken place.