

## **REPORT OF THE MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

**JANUARY 2016**

The Independent Remuneration Panel currently comprises the following persons:

Ms Sally Dubery – Chief Executive, Voluntary Action Elmbridge  
Dr Emily Glorney – Senior Lecturer, Royal Holloway University of London  
Mr Christopher Shrubbs – Senior Partner, Hamlyn's LLP, Chartered Accountants,  
Woking

The Panel met with Ray Morgan and Julie Northcote for an initial meeting on 11 November 2015. General discussions took place on the current Members' Allowances Scheme after which there were detailed discussions on how best to carry out the review and the purpose of the Allowance scheme. In addition the Panel reviewed the current level of allowances and compared allowances of other Councils in Surrey and the South East.

The Panel also considered the impact of the new electoral arrangements for the Council following the Ward Boundary Review conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission. Following parliamentary approval of the Boundary Commission's final recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Woking Borough, the Panel noted that Woking would be represented by 30 Councillors from May 2016 instead of 36 Councillors. Those 30 Councillors would represent ten three-member Wards across the Borough. The new arrangements would come into force for the all out Borough elections in May 2016. The Panel was advised that ongoing surveys of member activity had shown that the level of councillor workload had decreased steadily since 2004. The Panel was therefore of the opinion that the change in council size would not increase the burden on Councillors.

The Panel considered the structure of the current Members' Allowances Scheme and believed the reasoning behind its structure was still sound and considered that there was no reason to change. By way of a reminder, the Panel's rationale has been as follows:

- The Panel does not believe that an allowance should merely reflect a payment for attending meetings. The Panel's view is that a Councillor is probably more effective by being 'out and about' engaging with the local population, rather than merely attending meetings.
- From previous research undertaken by the Panel, it has been demonstrated that an allowance was not a major factor in deciding whether a person wished to participate in Council affairs, but rather an interest in local community matters and the desire to "make things happen".
- The Panel's view is that it is not appropriate to determine a level of allowance by reference to earnings lost on Council business. The Panel felt strongly that there is an element of the Members' work that is voluntary and to ascribe a monetary value to each hour worked was also inappropriate.

- The Panel felt that there was an argument that a higher level of basic allowance may make potential Councillors feel more duty bound to perform their task more conscientiously and effectively.
- The Panel supports Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) as it felt that the increased time spent in the role as a direct consequence of 'special responsibility', in particular the increased time input of direct contact with constituents by those in these roles, warrants a special responsibility allowance.

The Panel wrote to all 36 Councillors about the review and explained that the Panel was minded that each Member's Allowance should increase in line with the agreed pay award for Council staff. Councillors were invited to submit any representations that they would like the Panel to take into account during its review. A copy of the Panel's letter is attached at Appendix 1.

Seven Councillors replied to the Panel's letter. Three representations were received concerning Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs), including increasing the level of SRAs for Portfolio Holders in light of their extra workloads. One representation concerned maintaining the size of the total basic allowance "pot" and dividing between the 30 remaining Councillors. Two representations were a formal 'nothing to say'. One representation was received questioning why the ICT and Dependents' Carers' Allowance was subject to income tax and this will be answered separately by Officers.

A further meeting of the Panel was held on 11 January 2016 to discuss the representations received and to agree the Panel's recommendations to the Council.

Taking into account the representations received, the Panel discussed the level of SRAs currently paid to the Leader of the Council, Leader of the Opposition, Deputy Leader of the Council, other Executive Members (Portfolio Holders), Planning Committee Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman and Licensing Committee Chairman. The Panel was of the view that the SRAs paid to the Leader of the Opposition, Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman and Licensing Chairman remained adequate. The Panel agreed to recommend that the Deputy Leader of the Council SRA be increased by £500, other Executive Members SRA be increased by £250 and the Planning Committee Chairman SRA also be increased by £250. Therefore, the Panel's recommendations for SRAs is as follows:

Leader of the Council £5,000  
 Deputy Leader of the Council £1,500  
 Leader of the Opposition £1,000  
 other Executive Members £750  
 Planning Committee Chairman £750  
 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman £500  
 Licensing Committee Chairman £500

The Panel is of the opinion that a Member should only receive one SRA. In a situation where a Member holds more than one position which attracts SRAs, then the Member would receive the SRA carrying the largest amount. For example, if an Executive Member (SRA of £750) also held the position of Licensing Committee Chairman (SRA of £500) then the Member would only receive an SRA of £750.

The Panel's view is the total Allowances pot should be adjusted for 30 Councillors and the framework for the overall budget for Members Allowances increase over the

next 3 years by the percentage increase in the total Employee Budget. Regarding the Basic Allowance, the framework for the next 3 years should be that the Basic Allowance should be increased by the percentage pay award for 'cost of living' made to the Council's staff. The Panel's view is that Special Responsibility Allowances should be increased in line with the balance of uplift in the total budget for Members Allowances after deducting the uplift in Basic Allowances from a set basis in 2016/17.

The Panel also recommends that the Childcare and Dependent Carers allowances should be increased in line with the agreed pay award for Council Officers.

Regarding ICT Allowances, the Chief Executive drew attention to the ambition to move to paperless meetings from May 2016 and explained that there would be changes to the ICT Allowance as a result.

### Summary of Recommendations

1. The total Allowances pot should be adjusted for 30 Councillors for 2016/17.
2. The framework for the overall budget for Members Allowances increase over the next 3 years by the percentage increase in the total Employee Budget.
3. The framework for the next 3 years should be that the Basic Allowance be increased by the percentage pay award for 'cost of living' made to the Council's staff.
4. Special Responsibility Allowances be increased in line with the balance of uplift in the total budget for Members Allowances after deducting the uplift in Basic Allowances from a set basis in 2016/17 of:  
  
Leader of the Council £5,000  
Deputy Leader of the Council £1,500  
Leader of the Opposition £1,000  
other Executive Members £750  
Planning Committee Chairman £750  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman £500  
Licensing Committee Chairman £500
5. The Childcare and Dependent Carers allowances should be increased in line with the agreed pay award for Council Officers.
6. The ICT Allowance should be adjusted appropriately when the Council moves to paperless meetings.





To: All Members of the Council

Civic Offices  
Gloucester Square  
Woking  
Surrey GU21 6YL

**Telephone** (01483)  
755855  
**Facsimile** (01483) 768746  
**DX** 2931 WOKING  
**Email** [wokbc@woking.gov.uk](mailto:wokbc@woking.gov.uk)  
**Website** [www.woking.gov.uk](http://www.woking.gov.uk)

19 November 2015

Dear Councillor

### **Review of Members' Allowances by the Independent Remuneration Panel**

The Independent Remuneration Panel is carrying out a comprehensive review of Members' Allowances. Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council has a statutory requirement to review Members' Allowances each year. Every third year the Panel meets to undertake a comprehensive review. Following the last such review carried out in 2012, it was agreed that a further comprehensive review of the Members' Allowances scheme be undertaken for 2016/17 ahead of the new Council to be formed of 30 Members following all out Elections on new Ward Boundaries.

The Panel has considered the structure of the current Members' Allowances Scheme and believes the reasoning behind its current structure is still sound and considers that there is no reason to change. Consequently, the Panel is minded that each Member's Allowance should increase annually in line with the agreed pay award for Council staff. A copy of the current Members' Allowances Scheme is attached to this letter.

The Panel is inviting Councillors to submit any representations that they would like the Panel to take into account during its review. Please submit your representations in writing using the enclosed reply envelope by **Friday 4 December 2015.**

The Panel looks forward to receiving your comments.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Shrubbs  
Chair, Independent Remuneration Panel

For further information please contact Julie Northcote on 01483 743053 (Direct Line) or  
Email [Julie.Northcote@woking.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.Northcote@woking.gov.uk)



