

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Council	
MEETING DATE:	19 January 2023	
TITLE:	Members' Allowances Annual Uplift – recommendation from Independent Remuneration Panel	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Appendix 1 – current and proposed rates		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The Member Allowances Scheme was agreed and adopted by Council on 4th May 2021 following recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel. It provides that Members' allowances are uplifted at the same rate as officers' salaries are adjusted, in line with the National Joint Committee agreement. In previous years, this has been done on a percentage basis but, as the officer increase this year is not a percentage but a fixed amount of £1925 applied to each spinal point, the Panel were consulted on an appropriate percentage to apply to Members' allowances.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Council is asked to;

2.1 Agree that the basic allowances and special responsibility allowances paid to Members be increased by 4.04%, backdated to 1 April 2022;

2.2 Thank the Panel for their work.

3 THE REPORT

3.1 This is an issue for all Councils who link their allowance increase to the staff percentage and, as B&NES shares Panel membership with the Bristol City Council Panel (except for an additional Panel member for Bristol), to expedite the issue, a joint Panel was convened and met on 12th December 2022 to consider the uplift for both Local Authorities simultaneously. The B&NES Panel comprise;

Ronnie Alexander (Chair)
Graham Russell
Wendy Stephenson

[Keira Stobie, Bristol Panel member, was also in attendance]

3.2 Support to the Panel was provided by Bryony Houlden, Chief Executive of South West Councils as an independent adviser and Jo Morrison, Democratic Services Manager. [Lucy Fleming, Head of Democratic Engagement at Bristol City Council, was also in attendance].

3.3 The Panel met and considered benchmarking for other Councils both in the South West and other parts of the UK. They noted that the NJC pay offer included a figure of a 4.04% increase for staff allowances such as subsistence etc (which does not apply directly to Members' allowances as they are outside the NJC scheme) but, like a number of Councils, they considered this an appropriate starting point for consideration. They were advised that a number of Local Authorities had not yet decided how they would apply the increase, but of those that had agreed a percentage uplift, many had adopted the 4.04%, including London Councils.

3.4 Following debate, the Panel agreed to recommend a 4.04% increase, in line with a number of other Councils. They considered it was proportionate to recommend an increase that was not significantly more or less than that awarded to staff.

3.5 Appendix 1 shows the current and proposed amounts.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

4.1 The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 constitute the legal framework for councillors' allowances. The Council must establish an Independent Panel to advise on these and the Council is required to have regard to the advice and recommendations of the Panel when it decides on the allowances that councillors are paid.

4.2 The Panel are aware that the Local Government sector is experiencing financial challenges but are strongly of the view that elected representatives must be remunerated fairly for the duties they undertake, particularly with the current pressures impacting the cost of living.

4.3 The recommendation will increase the overall spend on Members' allowances by approximately £54k and is within the sum budgeted for in 22/23.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 A risk assessment was not required.

6 EQUALITIES

6.1 Elected representatives should be remunerated fairly for the duties that they undertake and in doing so this should encourage a more diverse and broader spectrum of the community to enter public life.

7 CLIMATE CHANGE

7.1 No direct impact.

8 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8.1 None.

9 CONSULTATION

9.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel were advised by South West Councils who had consulted comparator authorities.

9.2 The Cabinet Member for Resources, Group Leaders, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Executive, the Director of People and Policy and the Chief Financial Officer have been consulted.

Contact person	Jo Morrison, Democratic Services Manager
Background papers	Member Allowances Scheme – part 5 of the Constitution https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s75557/Constitution.pdf
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	