

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Council
Date: 5 December 2023
Reporting officer: Bhupinder Gill, Monitoring Officer
Subject: Members' Allowances Scheme

Purpose and summary of report:

To consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) relating to the Members' Allowances Scheme and adoption of a scheme of allowances.

Recommendations:

The Council is recommended to:-

1. Have regard to the IRPs recommendations set out in appendix one of the report.
2. Adopt a scheme of allowances (either the scheme proposed by the IPR or another).
3. Determine if the new scheme should be backdated to the start of the year (9 May 2023) when Councillors took up office (excluding special responsibility allowances which would be backdated from the date of appointment to that role) or be applicable from the date of approval.
4. Adopt either:-
 - i. No annual indexation for the scheme; or
 - ii. An annual indexation for the scheme (based on the average annual pay award for Gravesham Borough Council Staff) which can be applicable for up to 4 years.

Key Implications:

Item	Implications
Legal	<p>The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 make provisions about the payment of allowances to Members of local authorities. The Regulations require the establishment of an IRP whose function is to make recommendations concerning allowances.</p> <p>Local authorities must make provision for basic allowances which are to be paid to all Members. The setting of special responsibility allowances, travel and subsistence allowances and childcare/dependent carers' allowances is discretionary.</p> <p>There is a requirement to publicise the scheme at the Council offices and in a local newspaper.</p>

Finance and Value for Money	<p>The existing Financial Envelope for the 2023/24 financial year is £301,130. Going forward, an inflationary element has been added each year (matching assumptions around staffing costs) resulting in the following budgeted amounts for future years:-</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="549 300 1080 412"> <tr> <td>2024/25</td> <td>£316,170</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2025/26</td> <td>£325,670</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2026/27</td> <td>£332,180</td> </tr> </table> <p>The basic and special responsibility allowances are currently subject to annual indexation, in line with the nationally negotiated pay awards given to Gravesham Borough Council Staff.</p>	2024/25	£316,170	2025/26	£325,670	2026/27	£332,180
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Corporate Plan	Elected Members determine the strategic direction of the Council, as set out in the Corporate Plan 2023-27.						
Climate Change	There are no specific climate change implications resulting from this report.						

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Local authorities are required to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to comply with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The primary function of the IRP is to make recommendations to the Council in respect of its Members' Allowances Scheme including basic allowances, special responsibility allowances, travel and subsistence and childcare/dependent carers' allowances.
- 1.2 Councils are required to convene the IRP and have regard to the recommendations made by the panel before making any changes or amendments to its Members' Allowances Scheme.
- 1.3 In line with legislation, the IRP met in April 2022 to undertake a review of the Members' Allowances Scheme as the allowances were subject to annual indexation which cannot be relied on for longer than a four-year period. The recommendation of the IRP, which was approved by the Council, was that there be no change to the Members' Allowances Scheme until after the Local Elections in May 2023, at which time a further review of the scheme be undertaken by the IRP. The existing arrangement for the annual indexation of basic and special responsibility allowances, in line with the nationally negotiated pay awards given to Gravesham Borough Council Staff, be continued.
- 1.4 As the Local Elections had now been held, the following persons were appointed by the Council on 17 October 2023 to serve on the IRP (excluding Ms Julie Hobson who was appointed on 12 April 2022) and to undertake a review of the Members' Allowances Scheme with a report of their recommendations being submitted to Full Council on 5 December 2023:-
 - Ms Julie Hobson (appointed on 12 April 2022)
 - Ms Claudette Bramble
 - Mr Kevin Burbidge
 - Mr Jason Owen

2. Recommendations of the Panel

- 2.1 The IRP met in October and November 2023 to consider the current scheme. The report of the IRP, which sets out how the review was conducted and the recommendations made from it, is attached at appendix one for consideration.
- 2.2 For ease of reference, the Panel's recommendations are attached at appendix two.

3. Publicity

- 3.1 In accordance with the regulations an advertisement detailing the IRP's recommendation(s) has been publicised at the Council offices and in a local newspaper.

4. Appendices

- 4.1 The following documents are to be published with the report:
 - Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) – Appendix one
 - Recommendations of the IRP – Appendix two
 - Current Members' Allowances Scheme – Appendix three

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Secondary Implications	
Risk Assessment	There are no specific risks resulting from this report.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of <u>personal data</u> or <u>special category data</u> or <u>criminal offence data</u> ? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links. No
	b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A
	c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk . N/A
Equality Impact Assessment	a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. N/A
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. N/A
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Crime and Disorder	There are no specific crime and disorder implications resulting from this report.
Digital and website implications	Any decisions taken will be published on the Gravesham Borough Council website. There is a requirement to publicise the scheme at the Council offices and in a local newspaper.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	There are no specific safeguarding children and vulnerable adults implications resulting from this report.