

A Review of Member' Allowances for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

By

The Independent Remuneration
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Foreword

The Panels review activity for 2022/23 has sought to provide a comprehensive analysis and series of recommendations in relation to the existing scheme of Members allowances. In recognition that in recent years, the panel has focused on addressing key issues within the scheme, the panel this year has sought to review and rebalance the Members Allowance Scheme, recognising the changes that have taken place and associated impact this has had on some roles and responsibilities since our last full review.

On behalf of the panel, I would like to thank the Councillors and Officers who contributed to the review. Their time and considered views and evidence have been of significant value to the work of the panel, particularly in contextualising the strategic direction and objectives of the Council and the varied roles of elected members in supporting the realisation of these ambitions.

Stewart Towe

Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel

February 2023

Executive Summary Recommendations

Sandwell MBC Review 2022/23 Note LA= Leaders Allowance			
Position	No's Paid	Basic Allowance	Total £ per allowance category
Current basic allowance	72	£11552	£831744
Basic allowance	72	£11608	£835776
Special Responsibility Allowances		SRA 2023/24	
Leader of the Council (2.5x basic)	1	£29020	£29020
Deputy Leader of the Council (75% LA)	1	£21765	£21795
Leader of the Main Opposition Group (5-9 Members 20% LA) (10+ members 33% LA)	1	£5804 or £9663.66	£5804 or £9663.66 dependent upon group size
Cabinet Member (60% LA)	8	£17412	£139296
Chair of the Budget and Corporate Management Scrutiny Board (40%LA)	1	£11608	£11608
Scrutiny Board Chairs (33.3% LA)	4	£9663.66	£38654.64
Scrutiny Board Vice Chairs (20%LA)	4	£5804	£23,216
Planning Committee Chair (40%LA)	1	£11608	£11608
Planning Committee Vice Chair (20% LA)	1	£5804	£5804
Licensing Committee Chair (40%LA)	1	£11608	£11608
Licensing Committee Vice Chair (20%LA)	2	£5804	£11608
Chair General Purposes &	1	£2902	£2902

Arbitration Committee (10% LA)			
Vice Chair General Purposes & Arbitration Committee (5% LA)	1	£1451	£1451
Chair Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (33.3% LA)	1	£9663.66	£9663.66
Town Chair (33.3%LA)	6	£9663.66	£57982
Town Vice Chair	6	Recommend remove allowance	0
Ethical Standards & Member Development Committee chair (33% LA)	1	9663.66	£9663.66
Ethical Standards & Member Development Committee Vice Chair (10% LA)	1	£2902	£2902
Chair of Select Committee		Remove as Committee has been disestablished	0
Chair Land & Asset Management Committee (10% LA)	1	£2902	£2902
Adoption/Fostering Panel Councillor (20%LA)	1	£5804	£5804
Performance Champion (20% LA)	6	£5804	£34824
Joint Consultative Panel Chair	1	Recommend remove and qualify appointment to relevant cabinet portfolio holder	0
Total allowances			£1,279665.92

Recommended Changes to the Scheme

Basic Allowance: The Panel recommends that the level of Basic allowance be set at £11608. This is aligned to average gross pay across full time employees in Sandwell.

Leader SRA: The Panel recommends retention of the formula for calculating the Leaders SRA which is 2.5X Basic Allowance.

Deputy Leader SRA: the panel recommends a reduction in the Deputy Leaders allowance from 90% to 75% of the Leaders allowance. This accords with the benchmarking

Leader of the Main Opposition Group: The Panel recommends a revised and simplified calculation for the Leader of the Main Opposition Group. This is dependent upon the size of the membership of the group at 20% of the Leaders allowance for a group size of 5 to 9 Members or 33.3% of the Leaders allowance for a group size of 10 or more.

Chair Budget & Corporate Management Scrutiny Board: The Panel recommends an increase in the allowance to 40% of the Leaders allowance.

Chair of General Purpose & Arbitration Committee: The Panel recommends a reduction in the allowance to 10% of the Leaders allowance

Vice Chair of General Purposes & Arbitration Committee: The Panel recommends a reduction in the allowance to 5% of the Leaders allowance.

Town Board Vice Chair/Deputy lead Member: The Panel recommends removal of the allowance for Deputy Town Leads/Vice Chairs

Performance Champion: The Panel recommends a reduction in the allowance to 20% of the Leaders allowance.

Should the Council be minded to formally recognise Shadow Cabinet roles, that an allowance of 10% of the Leaders allowance be included within the scheme for all shadow cabinet members.

The IRP also recommends for consideration by Council:

Maintaining the 1 SRA rule only, so that a Member cannot receive more than one special responsibility allowance

Removal from within the scheme of allowances, separate allowances relating to paperless working and broadband.

The Panel recommends that an amount for DBS checks for Members is not incorporated into the Members Allowance Scheme. This is beyond the scope of the regulations. The Council may wish to consider whether this is a cost associated with being an elected member, for which the basic allowance applies. Alternatively, the Council may wish to consider establishing internal arrangements for the payment of DBS related fees.

A future review, by the Council of the operation of its policy applied to elected member mobile phones.

Background

This report contains the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), following its review of the scheme of Members' Allowances for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. The report also sets out the approach taken by the panel, and any rationale for its recommendations.

The IRP was convened under The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. These regulations provide for the requirement for all local authorities to maintain an independent remuneration panel to review and provide advice on the Councils Members allowances. The Council, in accordance with the regulations, retains decision making powers and responsibilities to determine the scope and levels of allowances.

All Councils are required to convene and seek advice from the IRP before they make any changes to their scheme of allowances and must do so having considered any recommendations from the IRP.

Terms of Reference

In accordance with the Regulations, the Panel makes recommendations to be considered by the Council, for the purpose of recommending a Members Allowance Scheme that establishes:

- a) The amount of the Basic Allowance that should be payable to elected Members;
- b) The responsibilities or duties for which should lead to the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) and as to the amount of such an allowance;
- c) The responsibilities or duties for which a travelling and subsistence allowances can be paid and as to the amount of such allowances;
- d) whether a Co-optees' Allowance should be paid and as to the amount of such an allowance;
- e) Whether Dependants' Carers' Allowance should be payable to elected Members, and as to the amount of such an allowance;
- f) Whether, in the event that the scheme is amended at any time so as to affect an allowance payable for the year in which the amendment is made, payment of allowances may be backdated in accordance with regulation 10(6);
- g) Whether adjustments to the level of allowances may be determined according to an index and if so which index and how long that index should apply, subject to a maximum of four years, before its application is reviewed;

Membership of the Panel

- Mr Stewart Towe (Chair). Stewart is the former Chairman of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership Board and remains Chairman and Managing Director of Hadley Group, an Engineering Group, with its Head Office and fourth manufacturing site in the borough of Sandwell. Stewart is a Deputy Lieutenant.
- Ashley Savell-Boss. Ashley Savell-Boss has over 30 years of experience in Funeral Directing, has served as a school Governor for over 30 years and now chairs the multi academy trust 'Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust' based in Smethwick.
- Ms Sylvia Parkin. Sylvia is a Lieutenancy ambassador for Sandwell. She had a career in public sector employment and was the Regional Employer Engagement Officer for the Wm RFCA and negotiated with Employers on the terms and conditions for Employment of Reserve Military Personnel. As a member of 2 Independent Remuneration Panels for other West Midland authorities, Sylvia brings significant direct experience to the panel.

Methodology and Considerations

The IRP met at the Council Offices Oldbury on the 18th November to consider its approach to review activity. The panel concluded that, due to the comprehensive nature of the review, the views of all elected members should be sought, and co-ordinated a series of meetings with individual and groups of Councillors that were held on 28th and 29th November 2022. The meetings were in private session to enable the panel to meet with Members, the Managing Director/Commissioner and Officers and to conduct its deliberations and develop recommendations in confidence. In addition, a short survey was circulated to all members so that all were able to participate in review activity. The IRP received 19 responses to the survey.

The IRP met with relevant officers for factual briefings on the Council, governance structures and current and future priorities for the council. As part of the review, the panel also reviewed a series of relevant documents including the current member allowance scheme, role descriptions for members in positions with responsibility and benchmarking information on allowance schemes in comparable councils.

A final meeting of the panel was held on 14th December 2022 where the recommendations to Council were confirmed.

Considerations:

Members allowances should not be viewed in the same way as a salaried role, and instead, in accordance with the statutory guidance on allowances, should recognise the time commitment of all councillors, including meetings with officers and

constituents and should further provide for any incidental costs incurred or associated with the roles of the elected member.

In reviewing the basic allowance, the panel gave consideration to the public service principle. This principle recognises that not all time associated with the role of an elected member should be remunerated and that there is an element of *pro bono publico* in being a Member. On average across English councils, 30-40% of the time involved is discounted for the basis of calculating the basic allowance.

A number of local authorities have introduced a formula to assist in setting the recommended basic allowance. This is often based on the average hours required to be an effective “ordinary” member, with no additional areas of responsibility, discounted by a percentage to allow for the public service principle and multiplied, in most cases, by the average gross hourly earnings for full time employees resident in the Borough.

In recommending SRA and posts that merit an additional allowance, the IRP has been mindful of the 2006 statutory guidance (para 72) that states:

“If the majority of Members of a Council receive a special responsibility allowance, the electorate may rightly question whether this was justified. Local Authorities will wish to consider very carefully the additional roles of Members and the significance of these roles, both in terms of responsibility and real time commitment before deciding which will warrant the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance”

The IRP has been mindful of its guiding principle that it has sought to reduce financial barriers to being an elected Member while ensuring that the remuneration and expenses received by Members represents value for money. The Panel also considered the financial implications arising from any changes to the Members Allowance Scheme and, recognising the current economic climate, have considered and made recommendations that, in the panel’s view, do not have a compounding effect on the Councils budgetary position.

Key messages arising from the review

1. Some changes to the scheme are desired.

The representations from Members in relation to the scheme provided for a variety of opinions on the current provisions. In the majority of responses, members were satisfied that the arrangements for the basic allowance to all members remained at a proportionate rate. This was measured against benchmarking data that included Black Country authorities, the wider West Midlands footprint and Cipfa nearest neighbours group of Councils and the IRP concur with this view. The panel in considering the application of a formula to aid in the calculation of the basic allowance, maintain that a formulaic approach remains appropriate.

However, Special Responsibility Allowances were not viewed through that same lens. Members were clear, in both the interviews conducted and survey data collated, that they view a number of disparities between the comparable workloads of some roles attracting a SRA and the allowances currently contained within the scheme. The IRP sought to explore this with Members and there was a general consensus from both interviews and the survey, that a number of roles attracting a

special responsibility payment, when compared with other roles with the same value SRA, had significantly higher or lower demands on the individuals in those roles including business planning and co-ordination, frequency and the demands of meetings, requirements of individual positions and contributions made by members in those roles. In exploring this further, the IRP has accepted this message and has made recommendations on changes to some levels of the scheme of special responsibilities to reflect the different levels of demand on different roles.

2. The current economic context cannot be ignored.

The IRP heard and accepted key messages from Members around the economically and financially challenging climate that many in Sandwell are experiencing. The vast majority of members were explicit in that, despite the costs attributable to the elected member role increasing in line with the economic climate, the Council would be unlikely to approve an overall increase in the total spend on Members allowances. The IRP has taken this view into account when deliberating and presenting its recommendations, however maintains that ultimately, the role of the panel is not to pre-empt decisions properly reserved to Council or seek to make savings, but rather to offer balanced recommendations to the Council on its scheme of allowances.

3. The political membership of the Council has changed since the last review

This position is accepted by the IRP. Since the last comprehensive review of the scheme, the membership of the Council has changed. The scheme currently provides for a Special Responsibility Allowance for the Leader of the main opposition group, that must, by regulation, be retained. However, having reviewed the formula for the apportionment of this allowance, and upon consideration of the role, have made recommendations that simplify the current basis for calculation.

The IRP's recommendations - the Basic allowance

To test the robustness of the current (2022/23) Basic Allowance the IRP has recalibrated the Basic Allowance by replicating the original methodology that forms the basis of the current Basic Allowance but with updated variables.

This methodology is laid out in the 2006 Statutory Guidance (paragraph 67) which states:

Having established what local councillors do, and the hours which are devoted to these tasks the local authorities will need to take a view on the rate at which, and the number of hours for which, councillors ought to be remunerated.

The Statutory Guidance (paragraphs 68-69) expands on the above statement by breaking it down to three variables for IRPs to consider in arriving at a recommended Basic Allowance. Firstly, a time assessment for the roles associated with the Basic Allowance; secondly, an element of public service to be recognised in the Basic Allowance; and thirdly a rate of remuneration upon which to base the Basic Allowance. The IRP has recalibrated the Basic Allowance by bringing the three operative variables up to date as set out below.

Time required in carrying out duties associated with the Basic Allowance

The Basic Allowance is primarily a time-based payment (see 2006 Statutory Guidance paragraph 10). Obviously, Members work in different ways and have varying commitments and the time spent on council duties similarly varies. Yet, the Basic Allowance is a flat rate allowance that must be paid equally to all Members so the time assessment is typically taken to be that which is deemed necessary at a minimum to carry out all those duties for which the Basic Allowance is paid. These duties include but are not limited to preparing for and attending meetings of the Council and its committees/panels (formal and informal), addressing constituents' concerns, representing and engaging with local communities, external appointments and other associated work including telephone calls, emails and meetings with Officers.

The IRP notes that the 2022 LGA Census of Councillors shows that Members who hold "no positions" of responsibility reported that on average they put in 22.4 hours per week plus on average a further 5.1 hours per week on group or political activities, totalling 27.5 hours on average per week. 48% of respondents to the Member survey identified as those without a position of responsibility. The results of the survey highlighted that some members allocated more hours and some less, however, on average, most reported that their roles required up to 30 hours per week, including ward and political duties, decision making responsibilities including preparing for meetings, and community or external body responsibilities. For recalibration purposes, the IRP has opted for a figure mid-way between the original assessment of 30 hours per week and the LGA Councillors Census average of Council related activities (22.4%), which equates to 26 hours per week.

The IRP has a strong sense that the time demands on Members have increased since the original time assessment of 2003 simply through increased demands placed on Members, particularly arising throughout the pandemic. The IRP is assured that 26 hours per week is a more accurate reflection of the average minimum time required to fulfil mainstream duties. The IRP has translated this as 169 days per year (on a 52-week year with an 8-hour working day), the equivalent to 3 full time working days per week.

The Public Service Discount (PSD)

The 2006 Statutory Guidance advises that to recognise there is a public service element to being an elected Member that not all the time expected from Members should be remunerated. To recognise the public service principle an element should be unpaid, known as the Public Service Discount (PSD). The normal range for this public service discount is between 35% and 40%, largely on the basis this is broadly in line with the proportion of time backbenchers nationally spend dealing with constituents and ward issues and local and community matters. The IRP has taken a view that a median PSD should be applied of 37.5%. With the application of the PSD, the expected time input of 169 days per year one third of that time, or 63.375 days per year, are deemed as public service and not paid, leaving 105.625 remunerated days per year.

The rate for remuneration

There are a number of options for the panel to consider in establishing the worth of a councillor's time. For some, a percentage of the median council staff earnings is used as the basis for calculation. The IRP has, for the purposes of the review,

based the rate for remuneration on the average earnings of the full time employed residents of the borough, as this is a robust mechanism for measure. The most recent data available through the Office of National Statistics shows that the median hourly earnings of borough residents who are in full time employment is £13.70 per hour, equating to £549.8 gross earnings per week or £109.90 per day.

Following the methodology established in the statutory guidance, the basic allowance has been recalibrated as follows:

169 days per year minus 37.5%PSD (63.375 days)
= 105.625 days multiplied by £109.9
= £11,608.19

The recommended Basic Allowance for 2023/24 is £11608 (rounded down)

Levels of Special Responsibility Allowance

Leader of the Council

A number of representations were received in relation to the SRA attached to the role of the Leader, with most offering the view that it did not appropriately reflect the almost, if not, full time requirements of the role. The IRP has, for a number of years, used the formula of 2.5 times the basic allowance in calculating the Leaders SRA. Other SRAs are then based as a percentage of the Leaders allowance. On balance, the IRP have considered that this should remain the basis for the Leaders SRA.

The recommended Leaders SRA for 2023/24 is £29020

Deputy Leader of the Council

The Deputy Leader considered, and this was supported by benchmarking activity, that the threshold for this allowance, at 90% of the Leaders SRA was higher than most within the region and comparable “nearest neighbour” authorities. This was accepted by the panel and it is recommended that the revised calculation for the Deputy Leader SRA be set at 75% of the Leaders SRA

The recommended Deputy Leaders SRA for 2023/24 is £21,765

Cabinet Portfolio Holder

There are no changes recommended to the formula for Cabinet members. It is recommended that this remains at 60% of the Leaders SRA. Should the recommendation on the basic allowance be approved, this would be set at £17412.

Leader of the Main Opposition Group

The IRP, in recognising the political changes within the Council, explored the current calculation for the Leader of the Main opposition group. The formula was complicated and could be subject to in-year changes, dependent upon political group membership. It was further considered that the current allocation this did not appropriately reflect the additional workload of the main opposition group leader.

The IRP recommends that this approach is streamlined and set a 20% of the

Leaders allowance where group membership is between 5 and 9 members, or 33.3% where membership of the main opposition group is 10 or above.

Chair of the Budget and Corporate Management Scrutiny Board

The panel were presented with considerable detail on the scrutiny review and the positive impact that member led improvements were demonstrating. A number of Councillors reflected the significant role and demands on the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Management Scrutiny Board in co-ordinating and management of all scrutiny activity, with the support of other Scrutiny Board Chairs and Vice Chairs. The increase in programmed scrutiny activity for this board was also highlighted and the IRP are satisfied that this is now in line with the Chairs of Planning and Licensing Committee respectively. On this basis, the panel recommends an increase in the allowance to 40% of the Leaders allowance

General Purposes & Arbitration Committee Chair and Vice Chair/ Chair of the Land and Asset Management Committee

Significant disparities in the workloads and frequency of meetings for some committees and Board was a repeated theme in member contributions. It was recognised that the work of the General Purposes & Arbitration and Land & Asset Management Committees were not proportionate with that of other formal Committees in that they met less frequently and had a reduced workload. It was noted, however, that changes to the Council's constitution had required the Chair of the Land & Asset Committee to work differently.

It is recommended that the SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the General Purposes & Arbitration Committee are set at 10% and 5% LA respectively and that the SRA for the Chair of the Land & Asset Management Committee is set at 10% of the Leaders SRA

Town Vice Chair/Deputy Town Lead

Following the above recommendation, there was an overwhelming view from elected members that the role of Deputy Town Lead/Town Board Vice Chair added very little, if any value, and that it should be considered as an option to be discontinued within the scheme. The Panel considered and formed the view that the roles could be developed further, however, since implementation had remained relatively static in comparison with other evolving roles within the council.

The panel recommends that the allowances for Deputy Town Lead/Town Vice Chair be removed from the scheme for 2023/24.

Performance Champion

The role of the performance champion, again, featured significantly in members' written and verbal submissions to the role. Appreciating that there have been changes in the role since early in the current municipal year, there was a strong view that this was a developing role, the value added was not yet measurable and therefore should not be afforded the same parity within the Members allowance scheme as a Committee or Board Chair. The panel accepts the view that the role of the performance champion is not clearly defined, and whilst able to gauge an

understanding of the role from one of the champions who met with us, we were unable to corroborate their experience with colleagues holding other performance champion roles. The panel accepts the wider views expressed and recommends that the Council keep the performance champion roles under review in 2024. In addition, the panel recommends a reduction in the allowance for Performance Champions to 20% of the Leaders SRA.

Select Committee Chair

It was noted by the IRP that Select Committees have been disestablished, therefore the panel recommends removal of associated allowance from the scheme.

Chair of the Joint Consultative Panel

The panel accepts that this position has, in recent years, been undertaken by the Cabinet Member with associated portfolio holder responsibilities. In practice, this means that the SRA has not been payable.

The panel recommends to Council that this allowance is removed from the scheme, should Council be minded to formalise the arrangement by way of a “by qualification” appointment of the relevant cabinet member to this role in future years.

All other SRA's

The panel were satisfied that the existing formulas for all other special responsibilities provides for an appropriate reflection of the roles, remits and requirements for those positions.

The IRP recommends that all other SRA formulas within the scheme of members allowances should be retained at existing rates.

Other Recommendations

Shadow Cabinet Portfolios

This issue of formally recognising shadow cabinet roles was raised with the panel and associated benchmarking data was provided and considered by the IRP. It is a matter for Council as to whether it would wish to recognise these roles and attach a special responsibility allowance. Should the Council wish to progress this issue, it would be the panel's recommendation that the roles should be afforded an allowance equivalent to 10% of the Leaders allowance.

Discontinuing the Paperless and Broadband allowances

The existing scheme has retained arrangements for the separate payment of allowances to facilitate paperless, electronic working. The panel considers that these working methods are well established within the Council and are now considered a normal method for conducting business. It is the view of the panel that household broadband is, for most, if not all Members, considered in a similar vein to a telephone line or mobile phone, in that it is a standard utility cost. Similarly, paperless working is an embedded working practice that supports the Council's objectives relating to climate change. **In considering these factors, the panel are recommending the discontinuation of both allowances.**

Dependent Carers Allowance

The Local Government Act 2000 explicitly clarifies the right of local authorities to pay a Dependant Carers' Allowance (DCA), which Members can claim to assist in meeting costs for care of their dependants while on approved Council duties. It is an allowance explicitly designed to enable a wider range of candidates to stand for and remain on the Council. Sandwell's current scheme addresses only those members with childcare responsibilities and does not reflect the wider dependent carer provisions within the legislation. Similarly, the proviso that child care costs may only be accessed for use of the Council house workplace nursery may be prohibitive.

These factors may potentially dissuade many from considering candidacy or continued membership of the Council. The IRP notes that the vast majority of councils now pay a DCA. Although it is rarely claimed in Sandwell, in the representations received there was overwhelming support to maintain the DCA largely on the grounds that it helps to reduce barriers to public service for traditionally underrepresented groups.

It is recommended that the dependent carers allowance be extended to include wider dependent carer responsibilities, and the existing rates and arrangements applied (i.e. actual costs up to a maximum of 10% of the annual basic allowance can be reimbursed for approved council duties).

It is further recommended that the requirement for childcare provision solely via the Council House Workplace Nursery be removed from the scheme.

Indexation

Under the regulations, the Council is able to maintain arrangements for the indexing of the members allowance scheme for a maximum period of 4 years. The current scheme is indexed to any annual national staff pay award which, until 2022 has been a percentage increase. From April 2022, the pay award was a blanket figure of £1925. This was with the aim of providing those staff in with lower paid roles with an uplift of 10.5% with an average uplift across the workforce of 7% and 4% for the highest paid roles. As a percentage of the Members basic allowance, to accept the entirety of the uplift would be to accept a 16.66% increase, which may be viewed as disproportionate. From the panels understanding, the uplift has not been automatically applied, as it sits outside the indexing "norm", nor has it been considered or accepted by Councillors. **It is recommended that should the Council be minded to consider accepting all or part of the 2022 pay award, it should be mindful of these comparators and it would be a recommendation that any uplift should equate to a maximum of 4% of the current basic allowance or £462.08 per member.**

It is further recommended that the scheme from 2023/24 onward be continued to be automatically indexed to any future staff pay award, however, where a blanket financial amount is agreed nationally, any associated uplift to the basic allowance should be capped at a maximum of 4% per annum.

DBS checks for Members

The Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee are considering the potential introduction of Disclosure Barring Service(DBS) checks for elected members. If agreed for introduction by Council, Members would be required to make a personal payment as part of the application process. The Committee requested that the IRP consider and form a view on whether the basic or special responsibility allowances should be adjusted to reflect any associated costs. Having given consideration, it is the view of the panel that any adjustment to the allowance scheme would fall outside of the scope of the regulations, as it is a local arrangement not captured in the provisions. The Ethical Standards & Member Development Committee should therefore form a view on whether the recommended basic or special responsibility allowances should incorporate this cost as part of Sandwell's normal Councillor activities, or determine alternative Council arrangements for payment of any fees associated with DBS checks.

It is recommended that all other elements of the Scheme of Member Allowances remain unchanged.

Implementation of recommendations

It is recommended that should the recommendations be approved, the basic allowance for all members be payable with effect from the 1st April 2023.

Future Activity

The panel are aware that work continues to progress in relation to the Council's review of its governance infrastructure and that a review of decision making bodies is to commence shortly. It is proposed that the panel will, following completion of that review, undertake a light touch review to assess any impacts arising from changes in the decision making structure.

Member Mobile Phones

The IRP recommends that the policy in relation to the provision of mobile phones to elected members should be reviewed by the Council. From an initial assessment, the current policy and associated management and administration of the scheme seem burdensome, and there is the potential that a review may offer some efficiencies.