

Welland Partnership Members Remuneration Panel

Report to South Kesteven District Council

7th November 2013

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Welland Partnership Members Remuneration Panel was reconstituted in June 2012. Our membership now comprises John Cade (Chairman), Colette Eames, John Greenwood, James Veitch and Gordon Wells.
- 1.2 Legislation requires that allowances for Elected Councillors are determined by their Councils following consideration of recommendations by an Independent Remuneration Panel. Reviews should take place at least every four years; your last review took place in 2010.
- 1.3 There were three components to our review:
 - a) A workshop held on 10th April 2013 in Grantham to outline how we do our work, the factors to be taken into account and to hear issues that Members wished to raise with us.
 - b) A voluntary time-sheet exercise undertaken by Councillors over May and June 2013.
 - c) An evidence giving session held on 9th July 2013 in Grantham to which all Councillors were invited to give oral or written evidence.
- 1.4 We are very grateful to all Councillors who contributed to this review and we would also like to place on record our thanks to Lucy Youles and Jo Toomey for their excellent support to us.

2. Context

- 2.1 As a Panel we were impressed by the thorough nature with which the Council approached the task.

2.2 Workshop 10th April 2013

- (i) It is not necessary to have an introductory workshop and most Councils move straight to the evidence giving stage. We welcomed the opportunity to have the workshop and from the feedback we received it was seen as very helpful.
- (ii) In terms of expectations, it helped us to clarify what a Remuneration Panel can and cannot do – for example there is no longer a provision to award an attendance allowance, this has been replaced by the flat-rate Basic Allowance.
- (iii) Similarly, we were able to advise that the Government was in the process of a consultation exercise on closing access to the Local Government Pension Scheme for Councillors.
- (iv) And the workshop was also useful in talking through the benefits and drawbacks of a time-sheet exercise. We think it fair to say that there were mixed views among Councillors about its usefulness, but what has impressed us is that once, on balance, a decision was taken to proceed then a positive response ensued.

2.3 Time-Sheet Exercise: May and June 2013

- (i) From the discussion at the workshop we all approached this exercise with “eyes wide-open”. We knew it could never be a scientifically objective exercise but that it could subjectively provide some very useful information, not just in our consideration of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances, but also to start developing an information bank for subsequent reviews.
- (ii) We are very grateful to the 24 Councillors who, in the midst of all the other demands on their time, completed time-sheets.

2.4 Evidence Giving Session: 9th July 2013

- (i) At our all-day session we took evidence from Councillors Frances Cartwright, Linda Neal, Jacky Smith, Mike Taylor and Bruce Wells. At our request, we also heard from your Chief Executive.
- (ii) Again, we are very grateful for these submissions which helped to develop the information we had already gathered from the time-sheets.

3. Findings

3.1 Legislation provides that Local Authorities' Schemes of Allowances:

- Must make provision for a Basic Allowance, payable to all Members
- May make provision for Special Responsibility Allowances
- May include provision for payment of travel and subsistence expenses
- May include provision for Co-optee Allowances
- May provide for the eligibility of Councillors for pensions under the Local Government Pension Scheme

3.2 Basic Allowance

- (i) We received no evidence for change. As one submission put it “It is probably about right in the context of other Authorities in the area.”
- (ii) It was also recognised that in these straitened economic times, when most people are having to tighten their money belts, now is not the right time for increasing the Basic Allowance.
- (iii) It was noted that, whilst very modest, the allowance is index-linked to Local Authority pay awards.

3.3 Special Responsibility Allowances

- (i) These are, as the name makes clear, responsibility allowances intended to reflect the degree of responsibility rather than demands on Member attendance.
- (ii) Whilst not universally the case, your Council has previously made a link between Special Responsibility Allowance payments and the Basic Allowance.
- (iii) We wish to retain this link and, in the light of the evidence given to us, would want to make a few adjustments for Committee

Chairmanships. These we show in the table below and explain in the subsequent paragraphs.

Committee	Current % of Basic	Proposed % of Basic	New Amount
Development Control	75%	90%	£3,942
Policy Development	66.6%	66.6%	£2,919
Scrutiny	66.6%	66.6%	£2,919
Licensing	50%	55%	£2,409
Governance and Audit	75%	66.6%	£2,919
Constitution	66.6%	45%	£1,971

- (iv) From the evidence we received there is no doubt that the obligations around the Chairmanship of the Development Control Committee have increased. We believe an increase in allowance is warranted.
- (v) We believe that, in terms of portfolio demands for the Policy Development and the Scrutiny Committees, the allowances continue to be pitched at the right level.
- (vi) With regard to the Licensing Committee, we believe the allowance should be slightly increased and be based on 55% of the Basic Allowance.
- (vii) With regard to the Governance and Audit Committee, we believe the responsibility levels are compatible with the Policy Development and Scrutiny Committees and therefore the allowance should also be 66.6% of the Basic Allowance.
- (viii) We understand that the Constitution Committee only meets on an if and when basis and we, therefore, believe that making this 45% of the Basic Allowance would be more appropriate.

- (ix) We believe that the SRA's to Vice-Chairmen should be retained and that these should be kept at the level of one third of the SRA for their respective Chairman. As well as providing cover in the absence of their Chairman there is also the important issue here of succession planning.
- (x) A number of contributors referred to the high personal workload of the Leader. Similarly, the roles of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members are very demanding. Those who gave evidence to us were very mindful, however, of the prevailing economic climate and none put forward reasons for change. We, therefore, believe that their allowances should remain as at present ie: the Leader: 3.25xBasic Allowance; the Deputy Leader: 2.25 x Basic Allowance; and Cabinet Members: 2 x Basic Allowance.
- (xi) In like manner, the allowance paid on a pro-rata basis to the Opposition as 75% of Basic Allowance should be retained.

3.4 Carers' Allowances

The Panel heard no reasons to recommend any changes in the Child Care and Carers' Allowance Scheme.

3.5 Travel and Subsistence Expenses

Whilst acknowledging the amount of travel required by Councillors representing rural wards, the Panel heard no reason to recommend any change in the current arrangements for reimbursing travel and subsistence expenses. However, in the same way as Allowances are linked to Officers' pay, we believe that Travel and Subsistence Expenses should also be linked to any variations in payments to Officers.

3.6 Provisions for Co-optees' Allowances

We received no evidence here.

3.7 Eligibility to Local Government Pension Scheme

Given that the Government is consulting on closing access to the scheme for Elected Members we received no evidence on this matter.

4. Budget Implications

4.1 Budget considerations have inevitably been a strand running through the evidence we received in the course of our review.

4.2 We are therefore pleased to be able to advise that our recommendations, if adopted, would provide a saving of £588. This comes about as follows:

5.

Position	Increase in SRA	Decrease in SRA
Chairman, Development Control	£657	
Vice-Chairman, Development Control	£219	
Chairman, Licensing Committee	£216	
Vice-Chairman, Licensing Committee	£72	
	+£1,164	
Chairman, Governance and Audit Committee		£366
Vice-Chairman, Governance and Audit Committee		£122
Chairman, Constitution Committee		£948
Vice-Chairman, Constitution Committee		£316
		-£1,752
Overall Changes		-£588

Summary of Recommendations

- 5.1 That the Basic Allowance remains unaltered.
- 5.2 That the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Leader, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Members and the pro-rata provision for the Opposition remain unaltered.
- 5.3 That the Special Responsibility Allowance for Policy Development Group Chairman and Scrutiny Chairman remain unaltered.
- 5.4 That the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Development Control Committee Chairman and the Licensing Committee Chairman increase to 90% and 55% of the Basic Allowance respectively.
- 5.5 That the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Governance and Audit Committee Chairman and the Constitution Committee Chairman reduce to 66.6% and 45% of the Basic Allowance respectively.
- 5.6 That Committee Vice-Chairmen should continue to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance at the rate of one third of their respective Chairmen.
- 5.7 That no changes be made to the Travel and Subsistence Expenses Scheme of the Childcare and Carers' Allowance Scheme, apart from the fact that Travel and Subsistence Expenses be linked to any variations awarded to the Officers' Scheme.

John Cade,
Chairman, Welland Partnership Members Remuneration Panel
August 2013