

Cheltenham Borough Council

Council – 16 December 2024

Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel

Accountable member:

Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel, Graham Russell

Accountable officer:

Director of Governance and Customer Services (Monitoring Officer), Claire Hughes

Ward(s) affected:

Not applicable

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) met on the 25 October 2024 and reviewed:

- Current Member Allowances and Member feedback received
- Consideration of a Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee

The Council is now required to consider the recommendations of the IRP. If the Council rejects the recommendations, then the current scheme will remain in place.

IRP Recommendations:

- 1. That a 3% increase be applied to Member's Allowances basic and Special Responsibility Allowances from 1 April 2025 following the National Joint Council for Local Government Services pay award and equal to an equivalent percentage increase of the £1,290 flat rate increase on a Grade I employee role.**
- 2. That the Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee be awarded a Special Responsibility Allowance of £4,463 to be backdated to the 1 September 2024.**

- 3. That the Vice Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee be awarded a Special Responsibility Allowance of £1,517 to be backdated to the 1 September 2024.**
 - 4. That the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee be reviewed by the Independent Remuneration Panel in October 2025.**
 - 5. In addition to the IRP recommendations Council are also asked to approve the role profile at Appendix 3 for inclusion within the Constitution.**
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1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

The financial implications of the increases in member allowances have been included in the draft budget proposals for 2025/26 also presented to the Cabinet today. There are no property implications of the recommendations in this report.

Signed off by: Gemma Bell, Director of Finance and Assets – gemma.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

When setting its Members' Allowances levels, the Council is required, under Regulation 19 of The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, to have regard to the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel that is established for the purpose of reviewing and providing advice on the council's Members' Allowances Scheme.

Signed off by: One Legal – legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

2 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

Signed off by: Maizy McCann, Climate Officer, maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk

2.1 Corporate Plan Priorities

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Ensuring residents, communities and businesses benefit from Cheltenham's future growth and prosperity
- Being a more modern, efficient and financially sustainable council

2.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

Please see the equality impact screening assessment in Appendix 2.

3 Background

Member's Allowance Increase

- 3.1 The National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) reached an agreement on the 2024/25 pay award with the unions on the 23 October 2024. The following will be applicable from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025:
- An increase of £1,290 (pro rata for part-time employees) will be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive.
 - An increase of 2.5% on all pay points above 43.
 - An increase of 2.5% on all allowances.
- 3.2 Since 2017, increases in the basic and special responsibility allowances have been linked to the staff pay settlement. However, in 2022/2023 employee pay awards comprised a flat rate figure, repeated again in 2023/24. In considering how a flat rate should be applied to Members' Allowances, the Executive Director Finance and Assets proposed at the time that increases to Members' Allowances be based on the average mean officer salary increase, weighted by full time equivalent. In consultation with the IRP, increases of 6.5 % and 6.1 % were awarded in 2022/23 and 2023/2024 respectively.
- 3.3 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) England Regulations 2003 requires that Members' schemes of allowances are reviewed annually and where they are linked to some form of automatic indexation, there must be a full review once in every four years. The Independent Remuneration Panel carried out a full review of Member's Allowances in September 2023. Council approved recommended increases in both the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances for 2024/25 on the [11 December 2023](#).

Cabinet Housing Committee Appointments

- 3.4 Following the [Cabinet decision in October 2023](#) to wind-up Cheltenham Borough Homes and to re-integrate housing services under Cheltenham Borough Council, Cabinet approved the creation of a new governance structure on the 11 June 2024 including the establishment of a Cabinet Housing Committee.
- 3.5 The new structure established effective and robust governance and set a framework that will help to facilitate and create ways in which our residents can play an essential part in helping to shape CBC's housing service. In addition, it provides the mechanism by which elected members can provide strong governance and understanding of our housing services and facilitates a link between the council and its tenants and leaseholders.
- 3.6 The Cabinet Housing Committee met for the first time on the 25 September 2024 and appointed Councillor Julian Tooke as Chair of the Committee and Councillor Richard

Pineger as Vice Chair of the Committee.

3.7 The Independent Remuneration Panel met on the 25 October 2024 to consider establishing a Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee. The Panel also reviewed a draft role profile for the Chair of the Committee, which is included at Appendix 3 and which members are asked to ratify for inclusion within the set of role profiles in the Constitution. The Vice Chair of the Committee supports the Chair with the responsibilities laid out in the role profile and cover as required.

4 Reasons for recommendations

4.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel have recommended that a 3% increase be applied to Member's Allowances from the 1 April 2025. In line with previously established practice this is the equivalent percentage increase of the £1,290 flat rate increase on a CBC Grade I employee role (team leader level).

4.2 The Panel have not recommended that this increase be applied to the 2024-2025 financial year as the 2023 Member's Allowance review recommended increase had already been applied to this period.

4.3 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) are paid in addition to the basic allowance to Members who hold positions with significant responsibilities over and above the general duties of a councillor, such as chairing of meetings.

4.4 The Independent Remuneration Panel have recommended that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee be paid a Special Responsibility Allowance of £4463 and £1517 respectively to be backdated to 1 September 2024. This is in line with the amount paid to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The recommendation has been made for the following reasons:

- The Cabinet Housing Committee is non-decision making and will primarily act as a scrutiny body with the ability to escalate identified concerns to Cabinet, Council, Overview & Scrutiny, or senior leadership.
- Ultimate responsibility remains with the Cabinet and respective Cabinet Member.
- It is not a regulatory committee.
- The Cabinet Housing Committee is scheduled to meet six times annually, this is in line with the schedule set for Overview & Scrutiny.
- Whilst the Chair of the Committee will have an additional responsibility to take part in the Regulator of Social Housing's Inspection, it is anticipated that this will only involve a couple of meetings every three to four years.
- Consideration was given to remuneration offered to former CBH Board members and the chair's of housing committees at two other council's.

4.5 As this is a newly developing committee working within a changing regulatory landscape, the workload may differ from what is anticipated. For this reason, the Panel have recommended that the Special Responsibility Allowance be reviewed after 12 months of operational experience i.e. October 2025.

5 Alternative options considered

5.1 Consideration was given to setting the Chair and Vice Chair Special Responsibility Allowance in line with that received by the Chairs of Licensing and Planning. However, it was felt that the role more closely aligned with that of the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny.

6 Consultation and feedback

6.1 Leadership Team, Finance Officers

7 Key risks

7.1 Key risks are identified in the risk register attached at Appendix 1.

Report author:

Rhian Watts, Democracy Officer, rhian.watts@cheltenham.gov.uk

Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Equality Impact Assessment – Screening –
- iii. Draft Role Profile – Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee

Background information:

[Council – 11 December 2023 – Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel \(IRP\) regarding Members' Scheme of Allowances](#)

[Cabinet – 11 June 2024 – Housing Transition Governance Arrangements](#)

Appendix i: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
1	If some provision is not made for increasing the basic allowance and SRAs then new councillors may not be attracted to stand for the role or existing members may step down.	Chief Exec	3	2	6	Reduce	The views of existing Councillors should continue to be fed back to the IRP and they should be made aware of any difficulties in attracting future councillors	Director of Governance & Customer Services	Ongoing
2	If Members Allowances are increased there is a risk that public perception will be that councillors are receiving an increase during financially challenging times.	Chief Exec	2	2	4	Accept	Recent increases in basic and special responsibility allowances have been based on the average mean officer salary increase, weighted by full time equivalent and as detailed in the report. Members can forgo any element of their allowance should they wish to do so.	Director of Governance & Customer Services	n/a

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
3	If the council does not have a governance structure that is fit for purpose, then it may not fulfil its statutory requirements in relation to the Housing Regulations	Director of Governance & Customer Service	4	4	16	Reduce	Review the structure after 12 months of operation	Director of Governance & Customer Service	July 2025
4	If the council does not have a governance structure that is fit for purpose then it may result in an inability to identify areas of failure and areas of improvement	Director of Governance & Customer Service	4	4	16	Reduce	Review the structure after 12 months of operation	Director of Governance & Customer Service	July 2025

Appendix ii: Equality Impact Assessment (Screening)

1. Identify the policy, project, function or service change

a. Person responsible for this Equality Impact Assessment

Officer responsible: Rhian Watts	Service Area: Democratic Services
Title: Democracy Officer	Date of assessment: 13/11/2024
Signature: <i>R Watts</i>	

b. Is this a policy, function, strategy, service change or project?

Function

If other, please specify:

c. Name of the policy, function, strategy, service change or project

Review of Member's Allowances and Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee.

Is this new or existing?

Is changing

Please specify reason for change or development of policy, function, strategy, service change or project

Member's allowances are being reviewed in line with the annual Pay Award. The Cabinet Housing Committee is a new Committee, which met for the first time in September 2024.

d. What are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes and who is likely to benefit from it?

Aims:	To ensure that councillor roles continue to attract and retain suitable candidates and provide effective governance.
Objectives:	To ensure that councillor roles continue to attract and retain suitable candidates and provide effective governance.

Outcomes:	To ensure that councillor roles continue to attract and retain suitable candidates and provide effective governance.
Benefits:	Ensures that councillor roles continue to attract and retain suitable candidates to provide effective governance.

e. What are the expected impacts?	
Are there any aspects, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could have an impact on the lives of people, including employees and customers.	Yes
Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative?	Positive
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	
Increase in allowance payments have a positive impact on councillors.	

If your answer to question e identified potential positive or negative impacts, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

f. Identify next steps as appropriate	
Stage Two required	No
Owner of Stage Two assessment	n/a
Completion date for Stage Two assessment	n/a

Appendix iii: Cabinet Housing Committee Chair Role Profile

- Role Profile:** Chair of Housing Cabinet Committee
- Responsible to:** Cheltenham Borough Council and the local people
- Role purpose:** To ensure that the housing regulatory responsibilities of the Council are undertaken in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures.

Main Duties and Responsibilities – *in addition to those duties of all elected members*

1. To chair meetings of the Housing Cabinet Committee in accordance with the relevant terms of reference and the Council's Standing Orders and Constitution.
2. To consider the submission of late items and to determine whether or not these are sufficiently urgent to be considered by the Committee.
3. To arrange proper consideration of the issues presented to the Committee and ensure that it has all the necessary information before it to make informed decisions.
4. To refer matters to cabinet for decision or action as required
5. To represent tenants and leaseholders and ensure that they live in safe, high quality homes
6. To represent the Council during inspections from the Regulator of Social Housing
7. To maintain awareness of national and local issues and regulations relating to Housing.
8. To liaise with officers as to the training and development requirements for committee members.
9. To lead the Committee in its role in reviewing, assessing and understanding the council's management of its housing stock, including property compliance and health and safety
10. To lead the Committee in its role in monitoring performance and delivery of the consumer standard including the new tenancy satisfaction measures.
11. To lead the Committee in its consideration of complaints data
12. To provide strong and effective connectivity between the Council and the Tenant and Leaseholder Panels