

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel

Derbyshire County Council

January 2013

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1. Background

1.1 The current Derbyshire County Council Independent Remuneration Panel was first appointed in 2010 and now comprises five members, none of whom are members of the Council or any of its committees, nor an employee of the Council. The members are;

- Mr Stephen Briscoe (Retired Director, NHS Personnel)
- Professor Allen Hutchinson (Emeritus Professor in Public Health, University of Sheffield) (Chair)
- Ms Bridget Longman (Director, Longman Accountancy Services Ltd)
- Mr Ian Orford (former Bank Officer) (Member from September 2012)
- Mr Tony Turnock (Director, Performance Development Consultants Ltd)

1.2 The panel has met three times during 2012-13.

2. Terms of Reference

2.1 The Local Government Act 2000 and the Consolidated Members' Allowances Regulations 2003, and subsequent amendments, require Independent Remuneration Panels to offer advice and rules on what Councillors may claim as expenses and allowances. Specifically they consider the following allowances:

- Basic allowance
- Special responsibility allowance
- Child care and dependent carer's allowance
- Pensions for members
- Travel and subsistence allowances
- Co-optee allowances
- Provision for suspension of allowances in certain circumstances
- Suitability of an index for allowances and what that index might be.

2.2 All recommendations are to be published and considered by all Councillors, and must be voted on by the full Council.

3. Process of Review

The Panel identified a number of issues for review during the process of presenting our second review to the Council in 2011-12. These are presented below under Section Five.

4. Review of Progress

The Panel has also reviewed the implementation of the 2011-12 report that was accepted by the Council in April 2012. The Panel has been informed that all of the specific recommendations have been put in place. The Panel has reviewed progress on the recommendations on detailed disclosure of Councillor's expenses which were agreed in 2011. The Council has made excellent progress in this regard, with

comprehensive information easily available online on both the Panel reports and on Councillor profiles and expenses. The Panel thanks Council Members and Officers for taking this forward. We understand that there is work in progress to also make the Register of Gifts and Hospitality available through the Derbyshire County Council website.

5. Specific Issues Considered and Recommendations

5.1 The Basic Allowance

In our Report for 2011-12 we indicated that we would again review the current level of the Member's Basic Allowance that is available to all Councillors, paid at £9948 per annum. Our analysis of allowances paid to members of other Councils shows that the Derbyshire Basic Allowance is in the mid-range of Basic Allowances paid by other comparable 'Shire' counties. The Panel therefore recommends that the Derbyshire Basic Allowance should remain at the current level for 2013-14. However, as we indicated in our Report for 2011-12, in accordance with current DCC practice as set out in S.2(b) of the Members Allowances Scheme there is currently provision for an increase in line with any increase in the Pay Award for DCC staff.

5.2 Special Responsibility Allowances

The Panel has undertaken a further review of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) paid to Councillors, together with a small number of Co-optees (Independent Members), for additional roles undertaken on Council business. Although our analysis shows that Derbyshire County Council SRAs tend to be at the lower end of the range paid by other comparator Councils, we recommend that in 2013-14 there should be no change to the level of the current allowances.

In addition we explored the question of whether it is reasonable that some Councillors might receive two Special Responsibility Allowances at any one time. During 2012-13 there have been four Members who each hold two Council positions in support of Cabinet Members or of Chairmen of Council committees. Each of these posts attracts an SRA paid at a level of £342.50 per month. Because the workload of any two of these posts in question should be manageable by one individual, we consider that it is reasonable practice (and one that may improve the efficiency of Council business) to allow Councillors to draw a maximum of two lower level SRAs at any one time.

The Panel takes the view that Council Members should only be eligible to receive one SRA where the level of responsibility is high, for example as in the case of a Cabinet Member post.

5.3 Review of allowances for SACRE members

In our 2011-12 report we reviewed the allowances available to members of the public who play a supporting role for the Council in their work on statutory committees. We have continued to monitor the outcome of our recommendations and find that the new allowance system for Appeal Panel members is working satisfactorily. We recommend that, on the principle of open governance, Appeal Panel members should continue to make subsistence claims against receipted expenditure.

The Panel has also explored whether any similar additional support was required for the SACRE panel [which advises the County Council on religious education matters]. We have now reviewed the support available to SACRE panel members and find that there does not appear to be any requirement to change current practice on support and allowances for SACRE panel members.

7. Work Programme for 2013/14

Early in the new administrative year, the Independent Remuneration Panel will discuss matters for the 2013/14 work programme with Officers and Councillors.

8. Conclusion

In preparing this report, and the recommendations contained herein, the Panel wishes to thank those Members and Council officers who contributed to our discussions and assisted the Panel in its work.