

## REPORT TO CABINET

Open		Would any decisions proposed :			
Any especially affected Wards	Mandatory	(a) Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide NO			
		(b) Need to be recommendations to Council YES			
		(c) Is it a Key Decision YES			
Lead Member: Cllr A Beales Cllr.alistair.beales@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted:			
		Other Members consulted:			
Lead Officers: Becky Box E-mail:Becky.box@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Officers consulted: A Baker, M Drewery and S Winter			
Financial Implications YES	Policy/Personnel Implications YES	Statutory Implications YES	Equality Impact Assessment required NO	Risk Management Implications NO	Environmental Implications No

Date of meeting: 4 Feb 2025

### **REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES PANEL FOR 2025/26**

#### **Summary**

This item introduces the report of the Independent Members Allowances Panel for the 2025/26 financial year and invites the Cabinet to consider the content and the consultation undertaken with the Leader and make formal recommendations to Council accordingly.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The content and recommendations of the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel dated November 2024 are noted.
2. The Members Allowances for 2025-2026 set out in Table 3 of this report are approved.
3. The Members' Allowance Scheme 2025-2029 attached as Appendix 2 is approved to come into effect on 1 April 2025 for a period of four years, subject to being updated with the Members Allowances approved at recommendation 2 above.

4. Following the 2025-26 year, indexation is applied to Members Allowances for 3 years in line with the percentage increase to the national joint council for local government pay services pay grades spinal column point 43.
5. The Chief Finance Officer is delegated to approve non-material revisions to the Members' Allowance Scheme, including the levels of allowances to reflect the current figures after indexation has been applied.

**Reason for Decision**

To comply with the requirements of The Local Authorities (Member's Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and set the allowances for 2025/2-9.

**1 THE INDEPENDENT PANEL**

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Member's Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 all local authorities are required to appoint an independent remuneration panel (IRP) to advise on the terms and conditions of the scheme for Members allowances. Local authorities must have regard to the recommendations of their IRP before making decisions on the Member's Allowances Scheme.

IRP's are required every four years. The last members allowances scheme came into effect in April 2021 and therefore, in accordance with the regulations, the next IRP was due during 2024/25 with the resulting scheme coming into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.

The Independent Panel for the current year was appointed by the Appointments Board in June 2024 and has been made up of the following members:

- Mark Palmer, South East Employers Organisation
- David Dixon, Independent/ Media Representative
- Mike Press, Independent/ Community Representative

The findings of the IRP are presented in Appendix 1.

## 2 CONSULTATION WITH THE LEADER

### 2.1 Public Service Discount

The IRP recommended the application of a 20% Public Service Discount to the Basic Allowance to take into account what they consider is the level of discount that should be applied. After consultation with the Leader on the proposals set out in the report it is noted that given that the Fair Remuneration Principle (para 3.2.1 IRP report) states that allowances should encourage people from all backgrounds to become councillors, and those that do so should not suffer unreasonable financial consequences as a result, 5% is proposed as an appropriate level of Public Service Discount (PSD) which is taken into account against the basic allowance.

### 2.2 ICT Allowance

The IRP recommended that the Members ICT allowance be withdrawn as they had recommended in previous reviews (para 4.4.1 IRP report). The Council had previously opted to retain the allowance for members. It is proposed that the ICT allowance be retained.

### 2.3 Licensing Committee and Licensing and Appeals Board Vice Chair's Special Responsibility Allowances

The IRP recommended that the Allowances for these Vice Chairs should be 35%. (para 4.2.1 IRP report) As this is essentially a cut in allowance with no diminishing of responsibility it is proposed that the Vice Chairs responsibility be set at 45%.

### 2.4 Standards Independent Co-optees

The IRP have recommended that this allowance remains at 2024/25 levels plus indexation (para 4.2.28 IRP report). Given the importance of having a suitable Independent Person on the Standards Committee and the demands of the role in terms of time, dedication, and a certain level of expertise, it is recommended that this allowance is indexed at the same rate as the members basic allowance in 2025/26 and thereafter.

### 2.5 Larger Opposition Group Deputy Leader Allowance

The IRP have recommended that this allowance be withdrawn (para 4.2.27 IRP report). With no diminishing of responsibility of the Larger Opposition Group Deputy Leader, nor of the need to substitute for the Larger Opposition Group Leader on occasion, as well as gaining political and procedural skills, experience, and knowledge to the benefit of the Council and the community, it is proposed that the Larger Opposition

Group Deputy Leader allowance be retained and set at 45% of the Larger Opposition Group Leader allowance.

2.6 Other Opposition Group Deputy Leader allowance.

The IRP have recommended that this allowance be withdrawn (para 4.2.27 IRP report). With no diminishing of responsibility of the Other Opposition Group Deputy Leader, nor of the need to substitute for the Other Opposition Group Leader on occasion, as well as gaining political and procedural skills, experience, and knowledge to the benefit of the Council and the community, it is proposed that the Other Opposition Group Deputy Leader allowance be retained and set at 45% of the Other Opposition Group Leader allowance.

2 **MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME**

The Council operates a Members Allowances Scheme which is updated each year to include the new levels and tax/NI implications for the current year. The Scheme is attached for approval as appendix 2. The appendix, containing the levels of allowances will be updated following the decision of Council.

3 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 The table below shows the costs of the Independent Review Panel’s proposals. The original budget projection for 2025/26 was £591,230. The recommendations by the panel amount to a total of £600,018.

Table 1

<b>Allowances based on IRP Recommendations including Public Service Discount of 20%</b>	<b>No Cllrs</b>	<b>Gross Amount</b>	<b>Deducted by Public Service Discount @ 20%</b>	<b>Net Amount</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
Basic Allowance	55	9,853	1,971	7,882	433,530
ICT Allowance	55	-	-	-	-
Cabinet Chair/ Leader of Council	1	29,559	5,912	23,647	23,647
Cabinet Vice Chair/ Deputy Leader	1	16,257	3,251	13,006	13,006
Cabinet Member	6	13,301	2,660	10,641	63,847
Policy and Review Panel Chair	4	5,912	1,182	4,729	18,918

Policy and Review Panel Vice Chair	4	2,069	414	1,655	6,621
Planning Chair	1	11,824	2,365	9,459	9,459
Planning Vice Chair	1	4,138	828	3,311	3,311
Licensing Chair	2	4,434	887	3,547	7,094
Licensing Vice Chair	2	1,552	310	1,241	2,483
Standards Chair	1	1,478	296	1,182	1,182
Standards Vice Chair	1	517	103	414	414
Standards Independent Co-optee	1	255	-	255	255
Mayor	1	10,346	2,069	8,276	8,276
Deputy Mayor	1	3,621	724	2,897	2,897
Larger Opposition Group Leader*	1	3,003	-	3,003	3,003
Larger Opposition Group Deputy Leader	1	-	-	-	-
Other Opposition Group Leader**	1	1,287	-	1,287	1,287
Other Opposition Group Deputy Leader	1	-	-	-	-
KL Area CC Chair	1	985	197	788	788
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>600,018</b>

\*based on £143 per member @ 21 members (minimum 6 members)  
\*\*based on £143 per member @ 9 members (minimum 6 members)

3.2 The following table shows the IRP's recommendation after amending the public service discount from 20% to 5% as discussed in paragraph 2.2. This shows a total cost of £711,670.

Table 2

<b>Allowances based on IRP Recommendations including Public Service Discount of 5%</b>	<b>No Cllrs</b>	<b>Gross Amount</b>	<b>Deducted by Public Service Discount @ 5%</b>	<b>Net Amount</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
Basic Allowance	55	9,853	493	9,360	514,817
ICT Allowance	55	-	-	-	-
Cabinet Chair/ Leader of Council	1	29,559	1,478	28,081	28,081
Cabinet Vice Chair/ Deputy Leader	1	16,257	813	15,445	15,445
Cabinet Member	6	13,301	665	12,636	75,819
Policy and Review Panel Chair	4	5,912	296	5,616	22,465
Policy and Review Panel Vice Chair	4	2,069	103	1,966	7,863
Planning Chair	1	11,824	591	11,232	11,232
Planning Vice Chair	1	4,138	207	3,931	3,931
Licensing Chair	2	4,434	222	4,212	8,424
Licensing Vice Chair	2	1,552	78	1,474	2,948
Standards Chair	1	1,478	74	1,404	1,404
Standards Vice Chair	1	517	26	491	491
Standards Independent Co-optee	1	255	-	255	255
Mayor	1	10,346	517	9,828	9,828
Deputy Mayor	1	3,621	181	3,440	3,440

Larger Opposition Group Leader*	1	3,003	-	3,003	3,003
Larger Opposition Group Deputy Leader	1	-	-	-	-
Other Opposition Group Leader**	1	1,287	-	1,287	1,287
Other Opposition Group Deputy Leader	1	-	-	-	-
KL Area CC Chair	1	985	49	936	936
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>711,670</b>

\*based on £143 per member @ 21 members (minimum 6 members)

\*\*based on £143 per member @ 9 members (minimum 6 members)

3.3 The following table shows the other considerations set out in Section 2 (as highlighted in blue). If all other considerations were approved, the total cost would be £726,443.

Table 3

<b>Allowances based on IRP Recommendations including Public Service Discount of 5% Plus alternative changes to be considered</b>	<b>No Cllrs</b>	<b>Gross Amount</b>	<b>Deducted by Public Service Discount @ 5%</b>	<b>Net Amount</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
Basic Allowance	55	9,853	493	9,360	514,817
ICT Allowance	55	218	-	218	11,982
Cabinet Chair/ Leader of Council	1	29,559	1,478	28,081	28,081
Cabinet Vice Chair/ Deputy Leader	1	16,257	813	15,445	15,445
Cabinet Member	6	13,301	665	12,636	75,819
Policy and Review Panel Chair	4	5,912	296	5,616	22,465
Policy and Review Panel Vice Chair	4	2,069	103	1,966	7,863
Planning Chair	1	11,824	591	11,232	11,232
Planning Vice Chair	1	4,138	207	3,931	3,931
Licensing Chair	2	4,434	222	4,212	8,424
Licensing Vice Chair	2	1,995	100	1,895	3,791
Standards Chair	1	1,478	74	1,404	1,404
Standards Vice Chair	1	517	26	491	491
Standards Independent Co-optee	1	273	-	273	273
Mayor	1	10,346	517	9,828	9,828
Deputy Mayor	1	3,621	181	3,440	3,440
Larger Opposition Group Leader*	1	3,003	150	2,853	2,853
Larger Opposition Group Deputy Leader	1	1,351	68	1,283	1,283
Other Opposition Group Leader**	1	1,287	64	1,223	1,223
Other Opposition Group Deputy Leader	1	579	29	550	550
KL Area CC Chair	1	985	49	936	936
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>726,131</b>

\*based on £143 per member @ 21 members (minimum 6 members)

\*\*based on £143 per member @ 9 members (minimum 6 members)

3.4 The budget for 2025/2026 has now been amended for the proposals by the panel and is subject to Council decision. Additionally, a contingency budget has also been set aside to make allowance for consideration of any other proposals such as those set out in section 2 of the report.

#### 4 **STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

It is a statutory requirement for the Council to take into account the comments and recommendations of the Independent Panel prior to setting its Allowances levels for the year.

#### 5 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The report of the Independent Panel.