

REPORT TO CABINET

Open		Would any decisions proposed :			
Any especially affected Wards	Discretionary /	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide	NO		
	Operational	Need to be recommendations to Council	YES		
		Is it a Key Decision	NO		
Lead Member: Cllr Terry Parish E-mail: <i>Cllr.Terry.Parish@west-norfolk.gov.uk</i>		Other Cabinet Members consulted:			
		Other Members consulted:			
Lead Officer: B Box E-mail: <i>becky.box@west-norfolk.gov.uk</i> Direct Dial:		Other Officers consulted:			
Financial Implications YES	Policy/ Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications YES/NO	Equal Impact Assessment NO If YES: Pre-screening/ Full Assessment	Risk Management Implications NO	Environmental Considerations NO

Date of meeting: 26th September 2023

MEMBERS ALLOWANCES

Summary

To agree the cost of living increase applied to Member's allowances for the 23/24 year.

Recommendation

Recommendations to Full Council:

That Council be invited to consider the 4 options set out in section 2 of the report and vote to decide which, of options 1,2, 3 or 4 is adopted as the increase for Members allowances with effect from 1st April 2023.

Cabinet Resolves

That Cabinet note a separate report will be presented later in the municipal year regarding the process for convening an Independent Review Panel for Members allowances.

Reason for Decision

The Council's Members Allowance Scheme provides for allowances to be updated annually in line with the Officer's cost of living pay award.

The Council's Member allowances are reviewed annually.

In February 2022, Cabinet recommended to Council that allowances for a maximum period of 3 years commencing 2022/23 should continue to be increased in line with the officers' pay award. This recommendation was agreed by Council on 23rd March 2022.

In 2023, the Officer's cost of living pay award will, subject to Cabinet approval 01/08/23 and Full Council approval 24/08/23, be:

- a) "£1925 or 5% (whichever is greater)
- b) A flat rate non-consolidated cost-of-living payment of £750pa (pro rata for part time employees) to be paid to all permanent employees and temporary staff (with a contract specifying a duration of 12 months or more) who were in post on 1st April 2023. This payment to be paid in 12 monthly instalments with effect from April 2023."

The £1925 or 5% (whichever is greater) proposal represents a 10.38% increase to staff on the lowest pay point, reducing as pay points increase through to a 5% increase for higher paid staff. The median % increase for staff will be 7.04%.

It is therefore necessary for Members to determine the % increase applicable for this year's cost of living update to Member allowances. The Monitoring Officer has assessed the situation and advised that a sensible interpretation of "indexed in line with the Officer's pay award" will be permissible.

NB. As the flat rate payment of £750 payable to staff is non-consolidated it is not proposed to include this amount in the options to increase member allowances.

The Council's budget for 23/24 has allowed for a 5% increase in Member allowances.

Arrangements for Member allowances are subject to review by an Independent Review Panel (IRP). In 2022 Cabinet resolved that "An IRP may be called at any time should the need arise or be otherwise appropriate but in any case will be called no later than autumn 2024 to conduct a further review and to report its findings in sufficient time to allow a revised scheme to be approved by Council, in accordance with the regulations, to come into effect on 1st April 2025". Members should note that this matter will be subject to a separate report to Cabinet, to be presented later during the current municipal year.

2 Options Considered

The following options have been modelled for consideration, in line with the minimum, median and maximum increases proposed in the officer pay award:

Option	Proposal	Additional Budget Required
Option 1	10.38% increase	£27,566
Option 2	7.04% increase	£10,491
Option 3	5% increase	£62
Option 4	10.38% increase to basic allowances and 5% increase on special responsibility allowances	£20,213/£20,762 (depending on whether ICT allowance is increased by 5% or 10.38%)

3 Policy Implications

Options 1 – 4 above are within existing policy, as outlined in the Members Allowance Scheme.

4 Financial Implications

The additional cost of each option is set out in section 2 of the report. Whilst option 3 is in line with the budget, options 1, 2 and 4 will require additional funding. If any of these options are supported then the additional costs will be sought in the current year in the following order:

- Offset by underspend in the service or directorate area in year
- Any additional turnover savings identified
- Or General fund reserve

There will also be an impact on future years which will need to be reflected in the base budget from 2024/2025 onwards.

5 Personnel Implications

None.

6 Environmental Considerations

None.

7 Statutory Considerations

It is a statutory requirement for the Council to adopt a Members Allowance Scheme.

8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Completed pre-screening form attached.

9 Risk Management Implications

The Council must provide a Members Allowance Scheme in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances (England)) Regulations 2023. The independent review that must be called by Autumn 2024 so that a revised scheme can be implemented by 1st April 2025. Relevant Officers will commence work on a timetable for the review in autumn 2023 to ensure it is progressed in a timely manner.

10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

11 Background Papers

(Definition : Unpublished work relied on to a material extent in preparing the report that disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based. A copy of all background papers must be supplied to Democratic Services with the report for publishing with the agenda)

Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

Borough Council of
King's Lynn & West Norfolk



Name of policy/service/function	Members Allowance Scheme – annual cost of living update				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function?	Existing				
<p>Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.</p> <p>Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations</p>	To agree the annual cost of living update to Members allowances for the 23/24 year.				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups according to their different protected characteristic, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			√	
	Disability			√	
	Gender			√	
	Gender Re-assignment			√	
	Marriage/civil partnership			√	
	Pregnancy & maternity			√	
	Race			√	
	Religion or belief			√	
	Sexual orientation			√	
	Other (eg low income)			√	

Question	Answer	Comments
<p>2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?</p>	No	
<p>3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?</p>	No	
<p>4. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?</p>	No	
<p>5. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions?</p> <p>If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section</p>	No	<p>Actions:</p> <hr/> <p>Actions agreed by EWG member: </p>
<p>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p> <p>Decision agreed by EWG member:</p>		
<p>Assessment completed by:</p> <p>Name</p>	Becky Box	
<p>Job title</p>	Assistant Director Central Services	
<p>Date</p>	26/07/23	