

The Welland Partnership Members Remuneration Panel

Report to Melton Council Meeting

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This Report has been prepared by the Independent Panel set up to make recommendations and provide guidance to the Council in respect of its scheme for Members' allowances.
- 1.2 The Report sets out the Panel's recommendations for the Council's consideration.

2. Framework

- 2.1 The Local Government (Members' Allowances) 2003 Regulations put in place a consolidated and simplified framework for allowances that covers Principal Councils and Parish and Town Councils.
- 2.2 Part 4 of the Regulations makes provision for the establishment of an Independent Panel to make recommendations concerning allowances, travel and subsistence and pension provision. The Welland Remuneration Panel, comprising John Cade (Chair), John Greenwood, Ian Davis and Gordon Wells, is compliant with the necessary arrangements. [Ian had other commitments on the day of evidence taking and has not been involved in this report]
- 2.3 A Council is unable to revoke or amend its scheme of allowances without first considering the recommendations of an Independent Panel. Whilst the Council is not bound by the recommendations of the Panel, there is a duty placed upon it to consider the recommendations, publish the Panel's recommendations and publish its Scheme.

3. The Ask

- 3.1 Our last full review was undertaken in March 2020.
- 3.2 For this more focused and limited review we were asked to look at whether it was appropriate or not to award Special Responsibility Allowances to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for their roles and also for the new post of Cabinet Support Member.

4. Our Way of Working

- 4.1 As with our previous reviews for your Council, we are always keen to hear from as many Councillors as possible on the scope and demands of the posts being looked at.
- 4.2 Our Panel convened, by zoom, to take this evidence on Friday 9th July 2021.
- 4.3 Over the course of the day we heard evidence from Councillors Joe Orson, Malise Graham, Steve Carter, Jacob Wilkinson, Pat Cumbers, Pru Chandler and Elaine Holmes and your Chief Executive Edd de Coverly. Written submissions were also received from Councillors Higgins and Fisher.
- 4.4 We are very grateful to all those who gave us oral and written evidence. It is fair to record that the overwhelming evidence we received about the roles of Mayor and Deputy Mayor was that their work needed greater recognition and support. On the role of the Cabinet Support Member many felt that it was still early days to give an authoritative opinion.
- 4.5 We would also like to put on record the very helpful support we received from Natasha Taylor (Democratic Services Manager) and Adam Green (Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer).

5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor

- 5.1 There is both a resource element and a money element to this ask.
- 5.2. The resources element remains a matter for the Council to determine. We were informed, however, that there had been an increase in dedicated support in 2020/21. It is now the equivalent of 1.5 days per week. It was considered that this enhanced support needed time to bed-in to see if it was sufficient as the Covid pandemic had distorted demands on the office, as it had in so many other areas. The point was also made that the Council will continue to support, with additional resources, other local events such as the Carol Service, Remembrance Day and Armed Forces Day.
- 5.3. Our remit relates to the money component. We have not, however, been previously involved in the remunerations of the posts of Mayor and Deputy Mayor so we have no antecedence to look at.
- 5.4. We would want first though to assure you that there has been nothing wrong in the Independent Remuneration Panel not having been previously involved, as many Councils, like yourselves, have used separate provisions under the Local Government Act 1972 to pay allowances. The advantage, possibly, of including these posts as part of the Members' allowances scheme is that it makes them more transparent.
- 5.5. As a framework for our examination we were provided with a schedule of changes to civic arrangements since 2018/19. This showed that you have in place two constituent parts, a personal allowance and an ability to claim expenses.
- 5.6. We understand that the personal allowances to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are intended to help maintain the dignity and expectations of the role including meeting the cost of items such as formal clothing, personal gifts, donations to charities, church collections etc.

- 5.7. We also understand that these amounts have remained at the same level of £3,300 pa for the Mayor and £1,100 pa for the Deputy Mayor since at least 2011/12. As you know, it has always been our practice as an Independent Remuneration Panel, and one you have always accepted, to index link allowances. We believe that this should now be done in respect of the allowances to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. If the Bank of England inflationary tool is used for the period since 2011 then this provides a figure of £3,938 for the Mayor's allowance.
- 5.8. We believe that the personal allowances have previously related to the Mayor/Deputy Mayors' ambassadorial roles. We consider that there is also a case to recognise the role of chairing the Council meeting. The efficient conduct of Council business at your 6 meetings during the year is both important for the performance of the Council and also its reputation.
- 5.9. Taking these matters into account we believe that a Special Responsibility Allowance pitched approaching that of a Portfolio holder can be justified.
- 5.10. As you know, your Special Responsibility Allowances are determined as a factor of the basic allowance. We consider this would put the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Mayor at 1 x Basic Allowance (£5,034). The Deputy Mayor would receive 1/3 of this (£1,678)
- 5.11. With regard to the expenses component, we expect the Council to continue this as before.

6. Cabinet Support Member

- 6.1. We understand that the consideration of this post emerged from a recent Local Government Association review. We know that the Local Government Association believe that such a post can be a useful mechanism for capacity and development.
- 6.2. We were provided with an outline role profile, but it was explained that this is still being developed. The role we were asked to

evaluate would be a post which would primarily support the Growth and Prosperity portfolio.

- 6.3. Whilst there are mixed views across the Council as to the need for this post, on balance, we accepted that it was not a dilution of responsibilities for the portfolio holder and that there were a number of important projects for the Cabinet Support Member to lead on. The postholder would also need to be able to draft and present reports.
- 6.4. We were also advised that whilst this post would not have any delegated authority (it is only a support role), it is expected that it will be quite influential.
- 6.5. We also ascertained that support would also be given by this post to another Portfolio holder if it was needed.
- 6.6. Taking all these matters into consideration we believe that a Special Responsibility Allowance of 1/3 of a Cabinet Member can be justified. (£2,098) This allowance is specifically for the one post currently in place. It does not set a precedent if any other similar posts are created.

7. Budget Implications

- 7.1. Our proposals would amount to a budget increase of £4,410 in a full year.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. That a Special Responsibility Allowance of 1 x Basic Allowance be agreed for the Mayor.
- 8.2. That a Special Responsibility Allowance of 1/3 of the Basic Allowance be agreed for the Deputy Mayor.
- 8.3. That the Council make clear what civic duties (eg Carol Service, Remembrance Day) the Mayor/Deputy Mayor can expect additional resource support over the dedicated support received.

- 8.4. That the Cabinet Support Member receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 1/3 of a Cabinet Member.
- 8.5. That, as with all other allowances, these be index-linked to any Officers' annual pay award.
- 8.6. That these allowances be payable from 1st June 2021.

John Cade,

Chair, Independent Remuneration Panel

July 2021