

FINAL REPORT

STRATFORD-ON-AVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (IRP)

FINAL REPORT ON ANNUAL REVIEW

JANUARY 2009

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is required under the *Local Authorities (Members' Allowance) (England) Regulations 2003*¹ and subsequent amendments to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to review and make recommendations to the Council on the range and levels of remuneration for elected Members.
- 1.2 Under the Regulations the Council is required to undertake a full review every 4 years. The last review was last undertaken in January 2008.
- 1.3 The panel met during December 2008 and January 2009 to undertake its first annual review of the current scheme. This report provides the recommendations of the Panel about allowances to be paid to Councillors serving on Stratford-on-Avon District Council for 2009/10

2. Membership of the Panel

- 2.1 The Panel comprised:

John Elliott - Director / Group Company Secretary, The Bird Group
Charles Goody – Chairman – Stratford-on-Avon LSP
Alan Bartlett – Trustee of the Council for Voluntary Services
Vic Allison - Deputy Managing Director, Wychavon District Council

3. Approach and Methodology

- 3.1 The Panel was provided with officer support and comprehensive information to help them with their deliberations. This included:
 - Detailed information on the Council's current scheme;
 - Details of other Councils' schemes;
 - Benchmarking information on levels of allowances paid in other similar local authorities;
 - Issues raised by both Officers and Councillors to be addressed.
- 3.2 The Panel received a full briefing from officers and were presented with the information outlined above. This included information to address the issues that the Panel had indicated that they wanted to review at their first annual review. These issues were set out in Section 5F of their 2008 report.

¹ See Statutory Instruments 2003 Nos. 1021, 1022 and 1692 for further details.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances

- (1) **That there be no increase for 2009/10 in the existing levels of both Members' Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs).**

Accordingly, these should remain constant at the 2008/09 levels:

	2009/10
Basic Allowance:	4,500
Special Responsibility Allowances:	
Leader	10,125
Cabinet Portfolio-holder	5,063
Overview & Scrutiny Chairmen	3,375
Area Planning Committee Chairmen	2,250
Other Committee Chairmen	1,125
Leader Majority Opposition	2,250
Leader Minority Opposition	1,125
Co-optees/ Independent	375

In coming to this recommendation, the Panel were mindful of:

- the existing level of allowances, particularly the basic allowance, continued to compare favourably with those at benchmark authorities;
- the current economic climate and the impact on the Council's current budgetary situation; and
- the comments received from some Members in response to the consultation indicating that they did not wish to receive a pay increase in the current economic climate.

The Panel had in its 2008 report recommended a stepped increase over two years in payments in both SRAs for the Leader and Cabinet Portfolio-holders. However, given the above, the Panel currently does not support implementing this now but will bring this forward for renewed consideration at next year's annual review. Also, the Panel continues to hold the view that there may be further scope to increase allowances should the size of the Cabinet reduce at any time in the future.

In relation to the workload of the Overview and Scrutiny, Licensing and Standards & Ethics Committees, the Panel did not consider that there had been any major increase in this over the previous 12 months. However, the situation, particularly in relation to Standards & Ethics and the new responsibilities for determining local complaints, would be reviewed at the next Annual Review of the Scheme.

4.2 Travel and Subsistence

(2) That Councillors' allowances for 2009-10 continue to be paid in accordance with the Council's Local Agreed Scheme for Officers.

The Panel was keen to ensure that any scheme operated by the Council embodied current best practice in promoting environmental interests. Accordingly, they would hope to see the incorporation of green incentives within the future development of the officer and member local scheme in line with current EU proposals.

4.3 Chairmanship of the Joint Committees

The Panel had brought this forward as an issue for review in terms of needing to consider harmonisation of the level of allowances paid by the District and County Council to Chairmen. Currently two of the three Joint Committee Chairs were County Councillors and paid on a higher rate (in accordance with the County Council's Remuneration Scheme) than the one District Council Chair.

Whilst having considered the potential for increasing the District Council SRA for this post, the Panel was mindful that this would create a discrepancy within the Council's own scheme. Accordingly, the Panel took the view that harmonisation of levels could also be achieved by the County Council reducing the level of allowances paid to the District Council level of £1,125. No increase in the level of District Council SRA paid to Chairs of Joint Committees is recommended.

4.4 "Incentivising" Training

(3) That the 12th instalment of the basic allowance payment be made conditional on a member having completed a personal development interview with their group leader.

The Panel had brought this forward as an issue for review as they were keen to see a link between remuneration and training of Members.

The Council's Member Development Working Group had considered this issue and, mindful that the take-up of personal development interviews had been low, they had made a proposal that the Panel supported and have included as the above recommendation. The Panel considered this to be a good starting position that could be further developed in future years.

4.5 Other Elements of the Scheme

The Panel decided to make no further recommendations in relation to changes in the scheme. However, the Panel would monitor the scheme over the next twelve months and assess any need for change at the next Annual Review after a further 12 months of operation.

4.6 Application to Changes in the Scheme

The operative date for the start of the revised scheme will be from the day of the Council's Annual Meeting when appointments to positions attracting SRAs are made.