

Diversity impact assessment

TITLE
Medway Independent remuneration Panel – report on Members’ Allowances Scheme December 2023
DATE
December 2023
LEAD OFFICER.
Jane Ringham Head of Elections & Member Services
1 Summary description of the proposed change
<p>What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed? How does it compare with the current situation?</p> <p>The Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent regulations require every local authority to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations about the financial allowances to be paid to Councillors.</p> <p>The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) has reviewed the Members Allowance Scheme and submitted its recommendations to the Council.</p> <p>In summary, the changes are as follows (No. of Councillors affected in brackets):</p> <p>Increases to the following Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs): Cabinet/portfolio holders (8) Chairpersons of Overview & Scrutiny Committees (4)</p> <p>The introduction of a new annual SRA to Councillors on the Fostering Panel and that it be index-linked to the media Council staff hourly pay until 31 May 2027.</p> <p>That if the Council agreed to appoint an Independent Person the Audit Committee and wish to pay that person an allowance, the Panel recommend an annual allowance calculated as 10% of the basic allowance against which it should be index-linked to the median Council staff hourly pay until 31 May 2027.</p> <p>That councillors be able to claim reimbursement for the actual expenses incurred on childcare or care of dependent adult relatives or children with special needs whilst carrying out approved duties. This removes the current two maximum hourly rates for dependent care costs that are currently in place.</p> <p>That the provisions for subsistence allowance remain unaltered but that the rates be indexed against those payable to Council staff for a maximum of four years</p> <p>That the arrangements for travel allowances in the current scheme remain unchanged but that Appendix 3 setting out the rates per mile be amended to indicate that the rate for use of all models of electric cars is 45p and all rates be indexed against the Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) rate until 31 May 2027.</p>

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2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment

Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user.

Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile

The IRP report is based on evidence from a variety of sources, including the levels of allowances paid in similar, comparator authorities, responses by Councillors to a questionnaire and interviews with a selection of Councillors.

3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to:

Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't

(insert Yes when there is an impact or No when there isn't)

Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age	NO	YES	NO
Disability	NO	YES	NO
Gender reassignment	NO	YES	NO
Marriage/civil partnership	NO	YES	NO
Pregnancy/maternity	NO	YES	NO
Race	NO	YES	NO
Religion/belief	NO	YES	NO
Sex	NO	YES	NO
Sexual orientation	NO	YES	NO
Other (eg low income groups)	NO	YES	NO

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4 Summary of the likely impacts

Who will be affected?

How will they be affected?

The IRP recommendations are based on their assessment that the majority of existing allowances compare favourably with comparator authorities but the ones they are recommending be increased will better reflect the relative complexities of each of the roles that attract the special responsibility allowances being increased.

All Councillors are paid a Basic Allowance to cover expenses. Travel and carers allowances can be claimed where additional expenses are incurred due to attendance at meetings or undertaking official duties.

The Panel are recommending the inclusion of a specific mileage rate for those using electric cars to recognise their increased ownership and usage. The rate matches that paid to Council staff.

The Panel are recommending that Councillors can claim the actual expenses incurred when engaging childcare, adult dependent care or care for children with special needs to reflect the evidence provided by Councillors that these costs are expensive and might influence a wider group of the community to become Councillors whilst also minimising the impact on existing Councillors who are incurring the costs. .

The Panel are recommending the introduction of SRAs to the Independent Person on Audit Committee to reflect their technical expertise and to Councillors on the Fostering Panel to recognise the time commitment involved.

Therefore there is unlikely to be an adverse impact on any of these characteristic groups.

5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?

Are there alternative providers?

Can demand for services be managed differently?

A provision is proposed that gives the Head of Elections and Member Services some flexibility to assist Councillors who need specialist dependency care where appropriate.

Full Council have the option to accept all, some or none of the Panel's recommendations if Members feel there are likely to be adverse impacts or that they do not improve equality of opportunity. In that event they would need to either agree alternative provisions or agree to continue with the existing Scheme for a period of time.

6 Action plan

Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
Travel, carers and specialist care costs will be monitored, as a large increase in these may indicate an impact on one or more of	Jane Ringham	31.3.2027

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Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
the protected characteristics. Results will be fed into future IRP reviews		

7 Recommendation

The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be: to proceed with the change, implementing the Action Plan if appropriate, consider alternatives, gather further evidence

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

The Panel's report is submitted to Full Council on 24 January 2024 to seek their approval.

8 Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that the recommendation can be implemented, sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned, the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored

Assistant Director

BHUPINDER GILL

Date of authorisation