

# **Brentwood Borough Council**

## **Members Allowances 2023/24**

### **Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel**

**December 2022**

## **Introduction**

1. This report presents the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and our recommendations for the scheme for 2023/24.

## **Background**

2. The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require councils to establish an *Independent Remuneration Panel*. The Council cannot alter or update its existing Scheme of Members Allowances without first considering a report from the Independent Remuneration Panel.
3. Local authority elected Members are entitled to receive allowances to compensate them for the role that they do and the responsibilities they assume on behalf of the communities they serve. A 'Basic Allowance' is paid to all Members of the authority to reflect the roles that they undertake. A 'Special Responsibility Allowance', is paid to those Members that have particular responsibilities within the Council's constitutional arrangements.
4. No additional subsistence or travel allowances are paid. However, Annual Council 2013 resolved that 'reasonable expenses' for external training and conferences are reimbursed, as required, and only with advance agreement of the Head of Paid Service.
5. The timing and process of the IRP's annual review was discussed in 2017/18. It was agreed that it would be more productive and useful to undertake the review alongside the Council's budget setting process in order to enable Members to scrutinise and consider the IRP's recommendations as part of their budget deliberations and decisions. This timing and process was put into place during 2018/19 and has continued since then.

## **The Independent Remuneration Panel**

6. The Independent Remuneration Panel 2023/24 comprised of
  - Mr Michael Hawkins
  - Mr Steve Marsh
  - Mr John Boylin

## **Existing Scheme**

7. In 2022/23 the member allowances were kept the same as they were in 2021/22.

## **Political Structure**

8. The Council consists of 37 members.
9. The current committee structure of the council consists of the following:
  - Full Council
  - Planning & Licensing Committee
  - Audit & Scrutiny Committee
  - Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee
  - Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee
  - Community and Health Committee

## **Our Approach and considerations**

10. The deliberations of the IRP were informed by:
  - The Council's current committee structure, and that there are currently no proposed changes to the structure for 2023.
  - Benchmarking information from Shire Districts in Essex.
  - Desktop research and contextual information regarding the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.
  - Previous reports and recommendations from the IRP.
11. The IRP were mindful of the function which Councillors perform in protecting and enhancing local democracy by providing representation on issues of local concern and ensuring that the Council remains accountable to the community which it serves. Accordingly, the IRP followed the same principles as in previous years:
  - the need for Councillors to come from a wide range of backgrounds
  - the necessity to ensure some recompense for the time and effort spent in serving the community, whilst recognising that the work of Councillors should include a substantial voluntary contribution
  - recognition of the time and resource demands of training and development, as well as other activities: and
  - whilst recognising that individual Members could choose not to take their allowance in whole or part, the IRP were keen to ensure that the scheme should encourage and support local democracy by ensuring that personal financial constraints would not be a bar to office.

12. Additional factors considered by the IRP in preparing its report to Annual Council 2023 included:

- Budget pressures on the Council and the need for affordability.
- The cost-of-living crisis and levels of inflation
- Increasing demands of Central Government giving more responsibility to Local Government
- Additional level of complexity for Members with the introductions of the OneTeam partnership with Rochford DC.

13. The options considered by the IRP included:

<b>Option</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
That members allowances for 2023/24 remain unchanged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members Allowances had increased by 1% in 2019/20, the first increase since 2014/15.</li> <li>• The Mayor and Deputy Mayor received an increase in 2019/20.</li> <li>• In 2021/22 members allowances were rounded down, along with the introduction of new SRAs for Chairs of Ordinary Council.</li> <li>• In 2022/23 there was no change to the allowances.</li> <li>• New Committee arrangements had last been adopted 2019.</li> <li>• There is currently proposed to be no change to the number of committees in 2023/24.</li> </ul>
That members allowances for 2023/24 be increased (options of 2% and 7% were considered)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff are receiving a pay increase of £1,925 in 2022/23. For Brentwood staff this amounts to an approx. average increase of 7%.</li> <li>• The draft MTFP included a 2% increase for staff for 2023/24 (since amended to 4%).</li> </ul>
That members allowances for 2023/24 be increased by 2% (rounded down to the nearest £100) for basic allowances only.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This would see an increase to the overall budget of £3,700.</li> <li>• Following discussions, this is the preferred option of the IRP.</li> </ul>

## Other Matters

It was noted that the Boundary Commission review means there will be an All-Out election in May 2024 and a move to 39 members (an increase from 37 currently). This will have an impact when setting 2024/25 budgets.

## Recommendations

15. After careful consideration of all the information provided the Independent Remuneration Panel recommend the following, with the total being no more than £279,500.

- (i) That members allowances for 2023/24 are increased (basic allowance only) or kept (other allowances) as follows

<b><u>Members Allowances 2023-24</u></b>	<b>Recommendation 2023-24</b>
Basic Allowance	6,100
Leader	13,200
Deputy Leader	6,350
Leader of Main Opposition	5,350
Leader of Minority Opposition	2,650
Committee Chair(s)	3,550
Committee Vice(s)	950

- (ii) With Mayor allowances for 2023/24 being kept as follows

<b><u>Members Allowances 2023-24</u></b>	<b>Recommendation 2023-24</b>
Mayor	4,500
Ordinary Council Chair	1,750
Deputy Mayor	1,500
Ordinary Council Vice Chair	500