

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

MEETING HELD AT THE BIRKDALE ROOM, TOWN HALL, SOUTHPORT ON MONDAY 10TH JUNE, 2024

PRESENT: Susan Lowe (in the Chair)
Ed Davies, Tony Hussey and Susan Murphy

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Joanne Hadley.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED:

That Susan Lowe be appointed Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interest were received.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

5. PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

Further to Minute No. 34 of the meeting of the Council held on 18 July 2019 the Panel considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer seeking the submission of views to Council on the approval of a Parental Leave Policy for elected Members.

The report advised that the Council, at its meeting held on Council on 18 July 2019 resolved:

- to adopt a parental leave policy, as per the attached indicative policy, to give all councillors an entitlement to parental leave after giving birth or adopting but noting the implementation of a policy will be subject to the Independent Remuneration Panel considering the implications and reporting back to Council;
- to ensure that councillors with children and other caring commitments are supported as appropriate; and
- to notify the LGA (Local Government Association) that this Council has passed a motion at Full Council to adopt a parental leave policy;

provided information on the delay in the submission of the report to the Panel; that the LGA had advised that they had been notified that over 80 local authorities had adopted parental leave policies but that they anticipated that more Councils would have adopted the policy but that they had not yet notified the LGA; and advised that on 21 March 2024, Simon Hoare MP, Minister for Local Government, had written to all leaders of local authorities in England regarding accommodating councillors with need of maternity, paternity or neonatal care leave.

The Minister's letter to all local authority leaders had generated correspondence between himself and Councillor Nesil Caliskan, Leader of the LGA Labour Group. Councillor Caliskan sought clarification on a number of issues and these were highlighted, together with the Minister's responses, in the report. Copies of the correspondence, together with the Parental Leave Policy, were attached as appendices to the report.

Members of the Panel asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- the wording of paragraph 1.4 of the proposed policy and whether there was a typographical error within the paragraph
- how and who would determine the "exceptional circumstances" referred to in various paragraphs of the proposed policy

The report concluded by seeking the views of the Panel on the adoption of Parental Leave policy for submission to Council.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to:

- (1) approve the Parental leave Policy for elected members subject to the word "of" in paragraph 1.4 being replaced with the word "or"; and
- (2) authorise the Audit and Governance Committee to determine any decisions on the application of the policy in respect of "exceptional circumstances".

6. DEPUTY LEADERS OF THE COUNCIL – PAYMENT OF SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES; AND CHAIR OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Panel considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer seeking views on the payment of special responsibility allowances to Deputy Leaders of the Council; seeking confirmation of the special responsibility allowance for the Chair of the Planning Committee; and if approved, whether the payment of the SRA's should be backdated to 16 May 2024.

The report indicated that Councillor Atkinson, Leader of the Council, had proposed that an SRA be payable to the two Deputy Leader positions due

to the additional responsibilities that they would undertake over and above their Cabinet Member responsibilities; that an exercise had been undertaken with Liverpool City Region local authorities (Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool St. Helens and Wirral) to find out if the positions of Deputy Leaders in those authorities attracted an SRA; and statistics about SRA's made to Deputy Leaders of Liverpool City Region local authorities were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

The report also advised that the Leader of the Council had amended the roles and responsibilities of Cabinet Members and in doing so, had reduced the number of Members on the Cabinet from 10 to 9; that as part of the reallocation of roles, the Leader had agreed that the duty performed by the former Cabinet Member – Planning and Building Control in chairing the Planning Committee be now undertaken by a newly appointed chair of that Committee; and that this would attract a payment of a SRA. In order to formalise matters, and in accordance with past arrangements, it was recommended that the position of Chair of the Planning Committee attract a SRA of 100% of the basic allowance.

The report also advised that the issues associated with the payment of SRAs to the Deputy Leaders and the chair of the Planning Committee were confirmed at the meeting of the Council held on 16 May 2024; that the Councillors appointed to the roles had been undertaking their additional roles and responsibilities since that date; and sought a decision on the backdating of such allowances to 16 May 2024.

It was anticipated that overall, if the issues detailed above were approved there would be a saving to revenue costs associated with the Members' Allowance budget.

Members of the Panel asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- the reasons why it was deemed necessary to introduce a special responsibility allowance for the position(s) of Deputy Leader
- the additional workload to be undertaken by the Cabinet Members in their roles as Deputy Leader
- comparisons between the other Liverpool City Region local authorities and Sefton in terms of population and numbers of elected members serving on such authorities
- statistics of SRA's made to Deputy Leaders of Liverpool City Region local authorities

RESOLVED: That

- (1) In respect of the payment of a special responsibility allowance for the position of Deputy Leaders:
 - (a) it be noted that the Panel would have found it helpful if the Leader could have set out a justification for the introduction of a special responsibility allowance for the Deputy Leader

positions;

- (b) notwithstanding the comments in (a) above, the Panel agrees with the principle of the payment of a special responsibility allowance for the Deputy Leader positions;
 - (c) that having taken into account comparisons between the other Liverpool City Region local authorities and Sefton in terms of population and numbers of elected members serving on such authorities, the Panel considers that Sefton most aligns to Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council;
 - (d) accordingly, the Panel agrees that the special responsibility allowance made to a Deputy Leader position should be 10% of the special responsibility allowance made to the Leader;
 - (e) that the formula be adopted whereby if the Council has two Deputy Leaders then the 10% enhancement to the special responsibility allowance be split 50/50 and that if the Council has three Deputy Leaders then the 10% enhancement to the special responsibility allowance be split by thirds and so on; and
 - (f) Council be recommended to approve the payment of a special responsibility allowance for the position of Deputy Leaders as set out in (d) and (e) above;
- (2) that the Council be recommended to approve that the position of Chair of the Planning Committee attract a special responsibility allowance of 100% of the basic allowance; and
- (3) that the Council be recommended to approve the backdating of the allowances to the Deputy Leader positions and Chair of the Planning Committee to 16 May 2024.