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Sefton Council 

MEETING: INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

(PLEASE NOTE: THIS MEETING IS NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ATTEND)

DATE: Wednesday 3rd July, 2024

TIME: 10.30 am

VENUE: Town Hall, Southport

Member

Susan Lowe (Chair)
Ed Davies
Joanne Hadley
Tony Hussey
Susan Murphy

COMMITTEE OFFICER: Paul Fraser
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AGENDA

Items marked with an * involve key decisions

| <u>Item No.</u> | <u>Subject/Author(s)</u> | <u>Wards Affected</u> |
|-----------------|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. | Declarations of Interest Members are requested at a meeting where a disclosable pecuniary interest or personal interest arises, which is not already included in their Register of Members' Interests, to declare any interests that relate to an item on the agenda. Where a Member discloses a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, he/she must withdraw from the meeting room, including from the public gallery, during the whole consideration of any item of business in which he/she has an interest, except where he/she is permitted to remain as a result of a grant of a dispensation. Where a Member discloses a personal interest he/she must seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or staff member representing the Monitoring Officer to determine whether the Member should withdraw from the meeting room, including from the public gallery, during the whole consideration of any item of business in which he/she has an interest or whether the Member can remain in the meeting or remain in the meeting and vote on the relevant decision. | |
| 2. | Minutes Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2024 | (Pages 5 - 8) |
| 3. | Payment of Special Responsibility Allowances to Deputy Leader Positions Report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer | All Wards (Pages 9 - 16) |

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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;

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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

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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.

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| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Report to: | Independent Remuneration Panel | Date of Meeting: | 3 July 2024 |
| Subject: | Payment of Special Responsibility Allowances to Deputy Leader Positions | | |
| Report of: | Chief Legal and Democratic Officer | Wards Affected: | All |
| Cabinet Portfolio: | Corporate Services | | |
| Is this a Key Decision: | No | Included in Forward Plan: | No |
| Exempt / Confidential Report: | No | | |

Summary:

To seek the reconsideration of the level of payment of special responsibility allowance (SRA) to Deputy Leaders of the Council.

Recommendations: That the Panel

- (1) following consideration of the justification of the Leader of the Council, give further deliberation to the proposal that the level of special responsibility allowance for the positions of the 2 Deputy Leaders of the Council be made such that 100% of the allowance be paid to each position as opposed to being split on a 50:50 basis; and
- (2) be requested to confirm the backdating of the allowances to the Deputy Leader positions to 16 May 2024.

Reason for Recommendation(s):

The Independent Remuneration Panel has been requested to reconsider this matter by the Leader of the Council.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

None. The Independent Remuneration Panel has agreed to reconsider the matter following a request from the Leader of the Council.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

- (A) Revenue Costs – The last meeting of the Panel agreed to authorise the payment of SRAs to Deputy Leaders which would increase the revenue budget by £2720.67.

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However, the Leader of the Council has agreed a restructure of Cabinet portfolios commencing in the 2024/25 municipal year. This restructure has resulted in the removal of one Cabinet position. This will result in a saving to the Members' Allowances budget of £18,137.43. Currently, and having taken into account proposals approved at the last meeting of the Panel in relation to the payment of an SRA to the Chair of the Planning Committee, there will be a saving to revenue costs associated with the Members' Allowance budget of £4410 if the recommended proposals are confirmed by Council. If the Panel agree to increase the SRA to Deputy Leaders then this will increase the cost to the revenue budget.

(B) Capital Costs - None

Implications of the Proposals:

| | |
|--|-----|
| Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): See revenue costs section above | |
| Legal Implications: The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) require authorities to make a scheme for the payment of allowances for members and before it makes or amends a scheme, to have regard to the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel. | |
| Equality Implications: None directly associated with this report. | |
| Impact on Children and Young People: None directly associated with this report. | |
| Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will | |
| Have a positive impact | No |
| Have a neutral impact | Yes |
| Have a negative impact | No |
| The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors | Yes |
| There are no direct climate emergency implications arising from this report. | |

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

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|--|
| Protect the most vulnerable: Not applicable |
| Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Not applicable |
| Commission, broker and provide core services: Not applicable |
| Place – leadership and influencer: Not applicable |
| Drivers of change and reform: Not applicable |
| Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Not applicable |
| Greater income for social investment: Not applicable |

| |
|---------------------------------|
| Cleaner Greener: Not applicable |
|---------------------------------|

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD/7703/24) has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report. The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD/5803/24) is the author of this report.

(B) External Consultations –Liverpool City Region local authority websites

Implementation Date for the Decision

With immediate effect. Any decisions of the Independent Remuneration Panel will however be submitted to Council for consideration and approval.

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Contact Officer: | Paul Fraser |
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| Email Address: | paul.fraser@sefton.gov.uk |

Appendices:

The following appendix is attached to this report:

Appendix 1 – Statistics of SRA's made to Deputy Leaders of Liverpool City Region local authorities.

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 At its meeting held on 10 June 2024 the Panel considered a report on a proposal that an SRA be payable to the two Deputy Leader positions and to the Chair of the Planning Committee. This report only deals with the issue of the payment of an SRA to the Deputy Leader positions.

2. Deputy Leaders of the Council – Payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance

2.1 Councillor Atkinson, Leader of the Council, proposed that an SRA be payable to the two Deputy Leader positions.

As Panel members will be aware, an exercise was 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 it was found that with the exception of Knowsley, Deputy Leader positions in Liverpool City Region local authorities did attract an SRA. Appendix 1 provides statistics of SRA's made to Deputy Leaders of Liverpool City Region local authorities.

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- 2.2 A copy of the report considered by the Panel on 10 June 2024 can be accessed using the following link to the agenda:

<https://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=206&MId=11625&Ver=4>

- 2.3 The Independent Remuneration Panel Meeting – 10 June 2024

The IRP resolved (Minute No. 6) that:

- (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, subject to (e) below 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;

- 2.4 Justification for the Introduction of a Special Responsibility Allowance

As Members will be aware from (a) in 2.3 above the IRP indicated that it would have found it helpful if the Leader could have set out a justification for the introduction of an SRA for the Deputy Leader positions. The Leader has been made aware of this and welcomed the opportunity to set out her justification.

Accordingly, and following consultation with the Chair of the Panel, this meeting has been arranged to provide Councillor Atkinson with the opportunity to set out her justification for the SRAs; and for the Panel, after hearing such justification, to potentially

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reconsider its previous decision on the level of SRA payable.

Councillor Atkinson has been invited to attend the meeting.

Councillor Atkinson has also provided the following justification for the introduction of a special responsibility allowance for the Deputy Leader positions:

“In order to respond to the changing role of local government, the renewed and refreshed ambition in the new Sefton Council corporate and transformation plan, the evolving role of the Liverpool City Region combined authority and recognising the need to influence and shape policy and services regionally and nationally, Cabinet has been reshaped with significant portfolio change - the first time this has happened in just under a decade.

These portfolio changes are designed to ensure strong political leadership in the Council, across the borough, and a strong voice for Sefton regionally and nationally. Specifically, this has led to reduction in the number of Cabinet Members through increased clarity of accountability with a single Cabinet member for Children, Families and Schools, and a refocusing of a number of portfolios in line with new priorities which in all cases will ensure improved delivery. Alongside these changes to individual Cabinet roles, there is a need to change the Deputy Leader role, to redesign it to reflect transformation internally, and the additional challenges and opportunities the council faces across the borough, in the city region and nationally.

Both Deputy Leaders will take on these additional responsibilities in addition to challenging Cabinet roles and will have an enhanced level and range of responsibility as well as additional volume of work to that of the previous deputy leader. Both Deputy Leaders will have delegated responsibility to make decisions on behalf of the Leader in the Leader's absence to ensure pace of delivery is maintained at all times. The details of the additional and different responsibilities of each post are as follows:

Deputy A – additional external political leadership capacity

Deputy A will attend, vote and negotiate for Sefton at the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Local Government Association, working directly with the Leader's authority with national government departments and with private sector and infrastructure bodies. The role will involve driving the devolution agenda in conjunction with the Leader. They will provide the required additional capacity to enhance regional and national relations and promote Sefton as an ambitious borough for investment and growth.

Deputy B- additional external political leadership capacity

Deputy B will represent the leader internally within the council and will drive policy and strategy to ensure there is a clear focus on our residents and our towns, ensuring that the Cabinet (and therefore the council) is greater than the sum of its individual parts. This post will also oversee member development. The role will involve working closely with partners such as health, police, schools and will hold partners to account for input and delivery.

Given the clear and additional workloads, and the focus of speaking on behalf of and across the Cabinet whether that is internally or externally, the proposal is set out as a reduction in Cabinet Members with their clear focus on accountability and delivery in their area, and in terms of an additional Deputy Leader which in both roles will work across portfolios to the benefit of Sefton residents. Therefore, it is proposed that both Deputy Leader roles attract the same remuneration, 100% of the Deputy Leader allowance.

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These changes have been carefully thought through not only in terms of the roles and responsibilities, but also in terms of the financial cost to the Council. This proposal would still see the overall cost of Cabinet being lower under this proposal than that in place previously, this providing value for money to residents and also recognising the enhanced roles being fulfilled.

3. Backdating of Allowances

- 3.1 Where a Councillor takes on duties entitling them to a different level of allowances the new level of allowances may be applied retrospectively to the time at which the circumstances changed; and the IRP may make recommendations, where relevant, as to whether the payments on which they have made a recommendation may be backdated.

For information and as Panel members will be aware, at the meeting held on 10 June 2024 the Panel agreed 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.

| LIVERPOOL CITY REGION STATISTICS ON SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES PAID TO DEPUTY LEADERS | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| Council | Leader SRA £ | Deputy Leader SRA £ | Deputy Leader % of Leader SRA | Amount if % in previous column applied to Sefton £ | Cabinet Member/ Chair of Policy Service Cttee SRA £ | Additional Amount Deputy Leader receives above Cabinet Member/ Chair of Policy Service Cttee SRA £ | Difference between Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member/ Chair of Policy Service Cttee as % of Leader SRA | Amount if previous column % figure applied to Sefton £ | Previous column figure plus Sefton Cabinet Member SRA £ |
| Halton | 25,002 | 17,002 | 68 | 18,500 | 14,002 | 3000 | 12 | 3265 | 21,402 |
| Liverpool | 42,100 | 16,014 | 38 | 10,338 | 16,014 | 2745 | 6.52 | 1774 | 19,911 |
| St. Helens | 35,678 | 19,896 | 55 | 14,963 | 19,896 | 3431 | 9.61 | 2614 | 20,751 |
| Wirral | 24,969 | 12,484 | 50 | 13,603 | 12,484 | 2497 | 10 | 2721 | 20,858 |
| Sefton | 27,206 | | | | 18,137 | | | | |

Note: Knowsley MBC – Deputy Leader position does not attract SRA

Information obtained from local authority websites on 7 May 2024

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