

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.

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:

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.

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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.

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

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.

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.