

Councillor Brodie-Browne

Recommended the same proposal as last time: a 10% reduction in Senior Councillors' rates i.e. 9 members: Leader, Cabinet Members, Chair of Licensing and Regulatory Committee and Chair of Planning Committee).

Councillor Dawson

It would appear that the panel had a very difficult job after the recent local election since the format of responsibilities and roles of various types of council members changed overnight from being in a three party coalition to being councillors on an Authority run by majority single-party government.

The process of 'constructive opposition', which had, previously, very largely been conducted both at individual Cabinet member meetings by 'spokespersons' with SRAs and through the Cabinet meetings themselves (which were much fuller in debate and questioning than they appear to be today) has gone: this responsibility is largely channelled through the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

The present allocation of resources for Councillors' Allowances of different kinds in Sefton MBC had to be done in a bit of a hurry in May /June 2012. I would hope that a thorough review this year, reflecting the new circumstances, would carefully consider the reality of the new circumstances, as well as making critical comparison with the situation in other local authorities in our region.

I would like to draw your attention to two specific issues.

(1) the balance between the Allowances paid to ordinary councillors and those paid to Cabinet Members, and other councillors receiving SRAs, appears to be a greater 'divide' in Sefton compared to many, if not all other local authorities in the North West. The SRAs should, in my view, reflect a consideration of both responsibility and workload. This has to be done as an average since the manner in which particular councillors discharge particular functions can vary dramatically even when those functions are nominally rated evenly. Thus, the effort put into performing the role of Cabinet Member can vary dramatically between councillors in one authority. Also, the responsibility of a particular Cabinet Member may be greater than that of another. The present post of Cabinet Member for Children, Families, Schools and Leisure appears to have more responsibilities than is the case with other portfolios.

(2) Opposition is a critical part of any mature democratic process. While the Opposition Leader does not determine decisions directly (s)he is responsible for ensuring the proper and full performance of the questioning and scrutinising which creates the democratic environment in which such decisions are taken. The responsibility of leadership of the principal opposition Party is considerable: this is reflected in the SRA system of most local authorities in the Region which have majority party governance. In most

of these, the SRA for Leader of the Opposition appears to have been determined roughly at the same level as that of a Cabinet Member. In one Authority the opposition leader SRA is actually paid at a higher rate than those of Cabinet Members other than that of Leader/Deputy Leader of the council. In several Authorities, there is a SRA for the Deputy Leader of the main opposition Party: this is a higher payment than that to the Leader of minor opposition parties, presumably reflective of the fact that there is generally far less responsibility falling upon the shoulders of 3rd and 4th party Leaders and far less work of liaison when there is a smaller group to co-ordinate.

I hope the panel members will give the above comments their consideration when reflecting upon the balance of Allowances to be paid between different types of councillors in the coming year. It is my view that the present financial situation places the onus upon councillors to set an example of frugality, hence any 're-balance' between SRA holders and the 'ordinary' allowances should be set by reductions in the former rather than increases in the latter.

Councillor Dutton

My views on the Members Allowances set out below and are as follows:-

1. The Basic Allowance should remain frozen as this has already been reduced over the last two years by 10%;
2. The Chairs of all Committees - Planning, Licensing, O/S and Audit and Governance should all be paid a similar allowance. I would suggest reducing the Planning and Licensing Chairs to the same level as O/S and Audit and Governance; and
3. The Mayoral Allowance should be a straight £12,780 with no Basic Allowance as he/she does not perform any Councillor duties during their term of office!

Councillor Hartill

Personally I am quite happy with the current MBA. However, I do believe that the MBA should follow the same annual rise as all other council employee's. That is. No rise for staff no rise for councillors and vice versa.

Councillor Killen

Please accept my apologies for not responding sooner. My reason for not responding is I don't really have an opinion about Members' Allowances yet I was only elected in May.

Politically speaking, the allowances are not popular with voters and certainly any plan to increase them is always met with disdain.

But it would be very hard to hold down a full-time job and also be a good Councillor. Luckily I do not work full time although I do need to arrange childcare so that I can do council work (the cost of which I can claim back). Without this I would struggle to fulfil my duties adequately.

I'm sure it is even harder to hold down a full-time job for the leader of the council and the leaders of the other parties. There is a requirement for employers to allow you time off for council duties but it does not have to be paid.

So I think allowances should reflect this.

Councillor McGinnity

I personally am of the opinion that the public at large would accept index linking of councillor's allowances to the rate of inflation similar to how the government calculates the annual increase in the state pension, that would I believe be acceptable.

The present system of reviewing them every four years or so is unreal as annual reviews are carried out universally across the nation and are deemed to be a fair method of evaluation of job positions.

Councillor Papworth

1. As regards inflation, I think Members should be treated the same as officers - ie if officers and staff get an inflation increase, so should Members (particularly as the Members took a voluntary pay reduction last year).
2. My opinion of the SRA paid to Committee Chairs remains the one I have consistently expressed over the past three or four years, ie:

Scrutiny Chairs (and perhaps the Chair of Audit and Governance) should get more, and the Chairs of Licensing and Regulatory and Planning should get less. The reason is that the former (a) have to spend more time, and (b) have the power - indeed, the duty – to make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of the Council, whereas the latter are required (by and large) to do no more than implement the law and accept officers' advice.

I say the above from a background of having been chair of one Scrutiny Committee, and Vice-Chair of another and also Licensing and Regulatory. I do however think that the current set-up, with Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Chairs who are just inexperienced poodles of the Cabinet, invalidates my opinion for the time being.

3. I do have a view about the Party Leaders' SRA, but for obvious reasons I will keep it to myself.

Councillor Sir Ron Watson

The question of Members' allowances cannot be seen in isolation and there is no case in my view for any form of increase

I think the percentage schemes adopted in the past have resulted in some slightly odd figures and I would be in favour of reducing the basic allowance to £8,000 with subsequent reductions in the responsibility allowances down to the nearest £1000 ie £17,040 should become £17,000 with basically odd amounts knocked off

The exception I want to raise relates to the Mayoral allowance which I think is totally inadequate and we are getting to the stage when anyone who is prepared to accept the office of Mayor of the Borough has to be prepared to have sufficient independent financial means to subsidise the post

I doubt whether any former Mayors will admit to this but I do know it is the case

I would suggest that the figure be increased to represent both the position and the responsibility and I would recommend a figure of £17,000