

Report of:	Meeting	Date
Marianne Hesketh, Service Director Performance and Innovation	Council	17 January 2019

<b>Members' Allowances Scheme</b>
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**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1** To inform Council of the outcome of an interim review of the Members' Allowances Scheme undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

**2. Outcomes**

- 2.1** A Scheme of Members' Allowances which appropriately reflects members' current roles, duties, responsibilities and commitments.

**3. Recommendations**

- 3.1** That, in line with the formula applied since 2012 and endorsed last year, the Basic Allowance paid to each Councillor be increased by 2%, from £4,176 per annum to £4,260 per annum, with effect from 3 May 2019.
- 3.2** That, in view of the planned arrangements to provide tablet computer devices to all councillors from May 2019 to enable paperless meetings to be introduced, the IT Allowance of £186 per annum currently paid to each councillor be withdrawn from 2 May 2019.
- 3.3** That provision be included in the Members' Allowances Scheme to enable the Chief Executive, in exceptional circumstances, to make a payment to a councillor experiencing financial hardship to obtain internet access at home.
- 3.4** That no other changes be made to the Scheme.

## 4. Background

- 4.1** The Council is required to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to review periodically its scheme of allowances for councillors. Unfortunately, since the last review, Mr David Blight has resigned from the Panel. The Panel therefore currently comprises just two members - Mr Ron Matthews (Chairman) and Mr Michael Collins. Ideally, there should be at least three members, but informal enquiries to attract a new member have so far been unsuccessful. The Panel has therefore had to undertake this year's "light touch" interim review with two members. Efforts will continue to be made to recruit at least one more panel member before the start of next year's interim review. The next comprehensive review of the full Members' Allowances Scheme is scheduled for the autumn of 2020, with any changes approved by the Council being implemented from May 2021.
- 4.2** The Panel has met on two occasions (5 November and 10 December 2018) to conduct the current review. The panel members have also considered and commented individually on documents sent to them by council officers.

## 5. Key issues and proposals

### Basic Allowance

- 5.1** Last year the IRP recommended that *"in line with the formula applied since 2012, (i.e. linked to the percentage increase in staff pay in the preceding year) the Basic allowance paid to each Councillor be increased by 1%, from £4,137 per annum to £4,178 per annum, with effect from 10 May 2018"*. That recommendation was approved by the Council and has been implemented.
- 5.2** Since then, the officers pay award for 2018/19 and 2019/20 has been agreed at 2% in both years. The current approach of linking councillors' allowances to staff increases is still considered by the Panel to be a fair methodology to use. It is therefore recommending that the Basic Allowance for each Councillor be increase by 2% (£84) for 2019/20.

### IT Allowance

- 5.3** Last year the Panel recommended that no change be made to the IT Allowance of £186 per annum currently paid to each Councillor, but indicated its intention to review that allowance at this interim review, in advance of the planned implementation of paperless meetings from May 2019. The Panel has been informed by the Head of Governance and the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager of the progress so far made in implementing that plan (which is to be the subject of an updated report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 January 2019). The Panel were also informed of a question about the proposals posed by Councillor

Berry and considered a number of comments and concerns expressed by Councillor Fail. No other councillors submitted any comments.

**5.4** In considering the comments made by Councillor Fail, the Panel has noted:

- that tablet devices and paperless meetings have been introduced at numerous other councils without additional equipment being provided or a separate IT allowance being paid. When last year's full review was carried out, Wyre's Basic Allowance was in the mid-range of other comparable councils and other districts in Lancashire;
- that the cost of charging the tablet devices will be negligible;
- that the cost incurred by councillors in downloading documents to their tablets will also be very small;
- that there should be no need for councillors to print documents sent to them by the Council but, if a paper copy of such a document is needed for a particular purpose, the Democratic Services Team could be asked to provide one;
- that, if a councillor considers that a printer is essential to enable them to deal with paper correspondence with constituents or for other ward councillor work, they could purchase a small, low volume printer at a fairly small cost and it would not be unreasonable to expect them to use their Basic Allowance to do so;
- that candidates for the elections in May 2019 should be made aware that they will be expected to communicate electronically with both the Council and their constituents in their role as a councillor; and
- that, whilst it is likely that most if not all councillors elected in May 2019 will already have the capability to access the internet from their home, the Panel accepts that no one should be excluded from being a councillor simply because they cannot afford to pay for broadband connection.

**5.5** Having considered the plans for the new working arrangements reported to it by the council's officers and the comments made, the Panel has come to the view that the provision of a tablet computer with the specification and functionality proposed will be sufficient to enable them to perform their key basic role as Councillors, i.e. to receive and consider reports and prepare for meetings and send and receive emails relating to their role as a councillor. The Panel has therefore concluded that there is no longer a justification for continuing the pay the separate IT Allowance introduced in 2015, subject to the Chief Executive having the discretion to

make a payment for broadband provision to individual councillors in cases of hardship.

Special Responsibility Allowances

- 5.6 At the time of the last IRP review, Cllr Henderson had recently taken over as Leader of the Council. He informed the Panel at that time that he had reduced the composition of the Cabinet from seven to six. He also explained that, for the time being, he had retained his previous responsibilities as Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, in addition to his role as Leader. The Panel has been informed during the current review that, in May 2018, Cllr Bridge (who had previously been Chairman of the Licensing Committee) was appointed to the Cabinet as Street Scene Portfolio Holder and Cllr Michael Vincent was transferred to the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio. At the same time Cllr Bowen’s responsibilities were changed to include Leisure, Health and Community Engagement. The Panel has noted the new division of responsibilities and that the total membership of the Cabinet, including the Leader, remains at six.
  
- 5.7 The Panel has also been informed during the current review of changes to the frequency of meetings in 2019/20, discussed at the Council meeting on 6 December. The Panel has concluded that the relatively small change in the number of meetings of the full Council, the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, is not sufficient to materially affect the level of responsibility of Cabinet members or the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which are wider than those involved in attending meetings.
  
- 5.8 The Panel has therefore decided not to recommend any changes to Special Responsibilities Allowances at this stage and to consider all such payments during its next full review.

Data Protection Registration Fees for Councillors

- 5.9 At the time of the last IRP review, there was uncertainty about the data protection registration fees for councillors. The Panel has noted that, since then, arrangements have been made for the councillors’ registration fees to be paid by the Council on an annual basis.

<b>Financial and legal implications</b>	
Finance	The cost of the proposed 2% increase in allowances for 2018/19 will be reflected in the draft revenue estimates due to be considered by the cabinet at its meeting on 13 February. The aggregate cost of the change of Basic Allowances is expected to be £4,200 and Special Responsibility Allowances £1,884 (£6,084 in total).

Legal	The Council has a duty under Regulation 19 the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 to have regard to the recommendations of the Panel when considering any changes to the Scheme. The Council is also required, (under Regulation 22) to publicise receipt of the report and the main features of the Panel's recommendations.
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### **Other risks/implications: checklist**

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

risks/implications	✓ / x
community safety	X
equality and diversity	X
sustainability	X
health and safety	X

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	X
climate change	X
ICT	X
data protection	X

### **Processing Personal Data**

If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in personal data being processed, a privacy impact assessment (PIA) will have been completed and signed off by the council's Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken (as required by the General Data Protection Regulations 2018).

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<b>List of background papers:</b>		
name of document	date	where available for inspection
None	-	-

### **List of appendices**

None.