

Report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel

Division and Local Member: All

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1. Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the report and recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (“the Panel”) following its review of the parental leave and carers’ allowance policy contained in the Scheme of Members’ Allowances
- 1.2. The arrangements for determining allowances for elected members are set down in statutory regulations - the Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021) and subsequent amendments to the regulations (SI 2003/1022 and SI 2003/1692). Each local authority is required to appoint and maintain an Independent Panel to make recommendations to the Council on members’ allowances. The County Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council, and Mendip District Council have established a joint panel to advise the councils’ on their respective Schemes. The Council must have regard to the Panel’s recommendations before making decisions in relation to members’ allowances but doesn’t have to accept them. Where the Council doesn’t accept the Panel’s recommendations it should give reasons for not doing so.
- 1.3 All Members have a personal and prejudicial interest in the receipt of allowances, but the Council’s Code of Conduct includes a dispensation allowing members to attend relevant meetings and vote on this matter. This paragraph has the effect of declaring this interest by all Members at this meeting of Council. Members do not need therefore to make a verbal declaration at the Council meeting.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **The Council is recommended to:**
 - (a) **Consider the Panel’s recommendations set out in section 7 of the Panel’s report attached as Appendix A to this report and decide accordingly.**
 - (b) **Authorise the Strategic Manager - Governance and Democratic Services, to make any amendments to the Scheme of Members’ Allowances 2020-21 required as a result of the Council’s decisions in (a) above.**

3 Background

- 3.1** In July 2019, the Council agreed to adopt a Parental Leave Policy for elected members and requested that the Constitution and Standards Committee consider the policy proposals. It further authorised the Monitoring Officer to consult with the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel on the policy and identify any potential implications and recommendations for the Council to consider in relation to member allowances. A commitment was also made to periodically review members allowances scheme to ensure there were adequate provisions relating to dependents' Carers Allowances.

In February 2020 the Council agreed to continue to apply the existing Scheme of Members' Allowances for the 2020/21 financial year starting on the 1st April 2020.

4. Implications

- 4.1** Financial: If agreed this would enable members to claim for a carers allowance for duties where eligible.
- 4.2** Legal: There are no legal requirements for parental leave for people in public office.
- 4.3** Risk: The risks are reputational rather than legal. The Council does not have to accept the Panel's recommendations but where it chooses not to do so it should give reasons that can be part of the record of the meeting. The Council is required to give reasons where it chooses not to accept Panel recommendations on allowances.
- 4.4** Impact Assessment: The equalities implications arising from any of the proposals are covered within the report. There are also no sustainability or community safety implications.

5. Background papers

- 5.1** Parental Leave Policy adopted by Council in July 2019 [Parental Leave Policy](#) .