

## Joint Independent Remuneration Panel

### Report to Somerset West and Taunton Council on a review of the allowances for the Taunton Mayor and Deputy

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2019 the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel prepared a report to the Shadow Authority on Members Allowances. Included within it was a consideration of the roles of Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the unparished areas of Taunton. At the time the Panel prepared the report, it was considered that there was insufficient information to make firm decisions, and so an interim recommendation regarding allowances was made, with a proviso that after “a year’s experience of the offices of Mayor and Deputy Mayor”, the allowances be reviewed by the Panel. This report is that review.
- 1.2 The Panel thanks Somerset West and Taunton Council for information provided, and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for their views and is indebted for the advice of the officers supporting the Panel.

#### 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Panel has reviewed the workload of the Mayor and Deputy with information supplied by the Council, and has considered how the allowances compare with other areas with Charter Trustees. The Panel has noted that the workload of the Mayor, and particularly the Deputy has not met expectations, but acknowledges that, in part, this is due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- 2.2 Accordingly the Panel recommends that :  
the allowance for Mayor remain as it is, whilst that of the Deputy should be reduced by half to reflect the reduced workload;  
the index linking of the allowance be retained;  
the situation be reviewed again in a year, when hopefully ‘normal’ (post Covid-19) activity has taken place.

#### 3. Members’ Allowances and Remuneration Panels – the legal position

- 3.1 As a reminder to members, the legal provisions in relation to members’ allowances are set out in the Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021) and subsequent amendments to the regulations (SI 2003/1022 and SI 2003/1692) [“the Regulations”].
- 3.2 Under the Regulations each Council must appoint an Independent Panel to make recommendations on its Scheme of Members’ Allowances. The Council must have due regard to the recommendations of the Panel before it makes any decisions in relation to its Scheme, although it may accept, reject, or amend any of the Panel’s recommendations, but give reasons if rejected. The Regulations provide for a single panel to advise more than one Council.

## 4. Joint Independent Remuneration Panel

- 4.1 Somerset West and Taunton Council forms part of the Panel, along with Mendip District Council and Somerset County Council. The Panel's membership comprises three independent representatives appointed by the County Council and one each by the other Councils. All of the members of the Panel are residents of Somerset. There is currently one vacancy. The make-up of the Panel is outlined in brief below:

### **Panel members:**

#### John Thomson (Chair)

From a housing background, initially worked for local authorities and then was Chief Executive of SHAL Housing, a Bridgwater-based housing association, for 20 years and now retired. John represents Somerset West and Taunton on the Panel.

#### Colin McDonald

Semi-retired after over 30 years full-time employment in social housing, 25 (in total) of these at South Somerset District Council (over two occasions) including several years as Head of Housing & Welfare.

#### Bryony Houlden

Chief Executive of South West Councils. Provides advice and support on a range of member issues, including serving as a member of several Independent Remuneration Panels.

#### Alan Wells

39 years' experience in financial services. Specialist in benefit and remuneration structures.

### **Technical Advisers to the Panel:**

Scott Wooldridge, Monitoring Officer, Somerset County Council

Julia Jones, Governance Specialist – Democratic Services, Somerset County Council

## **5. Panel Assessment**

- 5.1 In our report of March 2019, the Panel stated that, with regard to the "Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Charter Trustees body, we have identified the following relevant, core roles/activities:

Chairing the Charter Trustee body;  
An ambassador for the area both locally and on a wider national/international platform;  
Representing the area and its citizens;  
Supporting the local community;  
Hosting events."

We went on to say that, "being elected as Mayor is an honour, and there

should be an element of personal pride in carrying out the role, analogous to the idea of a ‘public service’ contribution by ordinary councillors in the execution of their role, i.e. part of the role for which there is neither payment nor other material recognition.

The Mayoral role, in the context of working in conjunction with the new Authority (SWTC), is one that will develop over time. However, it is clear that there are certain special characteristics that can be identified now. These are: a significant time commitment and high level of sustained personal commitment in attending functions and other events throughout the year; constitutional relevance, particularly observing agreed protocols; a degree of complexity in understanding the context of each event/function/activity.

The Panel has been advised of the probable number of events (the likely figure will be high – perhaps between 300 and 400), that the Mayor, and to a lesser extent the Deputy Mayor, could attend in any year. Similarly, the Panel has considered the impact of having both a local authority Chair and a Mayor for the unparished area. It is clear to us that effective working arrangements will need to be put in place so that the Chair and Mayor, and the local community, are clear about both roles and their relevance.”

5.2 As a consequence of the above, the Panel sought information from the Council on how these roles were working out in practice. Table 1 below indicates activity during the year 2019/20 with a comparison to the previous arrangements the preceding year, as provided by the Council.

	Mayor	Deputy Mayor	Past Mayor	Leader	Chair	Vice Chair	TOTAL
03/05/2018 – 23/05/2019	324	85	5*	x	x	x	409
23/05/2019 – 16/03/2020  (The Covid lockdown stood down events from 16 March 2020)	132	26	1**	5	90	22	276

\*Deputy Mayor not installed until 10 July 2018

\*\*The Mayor of Taunton was not installed until 4 June 2019

**Table 1**

5.3 As can be seen, the year 2019/20 covers a period of about 10 months, due

to the imposition of the lockdown, giving the town Mayor approximately 13 functions a month. The Chair of the Council fulfils about 9 functions a month. By comparison, the Mayor of Taunton Deane carried out about 27 functions a month, slightly more than the combined total of the town Mayor and the Chair. However, these are unusual times, and the position of Mayor is still new. It must be stated that the figure is nowhere near the 300-400 expected when the Panel reported in 2019.

- 5.4 The role of the Deputy Mayor is, as can be seen, even quieter with only 2.6 functions a month. The Vice Chair fulfils a further 2 functions, totalling under 5 functions in total. Under the old system, the Deputy Mayor completed about a quarter of the number of functions completed by the Mayor; the Panel, in 2019, accepted that this situation might continue after the merger of the Councils and the creation of a Mayor and Deputy for the unparished area. In actuality, whilst the Vice Chair is completing about a quarter of the functions of the Chair, the Deputy Mayor is completing about a fifth. So, whilst both the Mayor and Deputy are completing fewer functions than anticipated, the Deputy is proportionally completing far fewer.
- 5.5 It has also been pointed out that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor carry out principally ceremonial roles not requiring taking decisions or responsibility, and the previous Borough Mayor was responsible for the whole of the Borough of Taunton Deane, which encompasses a much larger geographical area, while the current Mayor is responsible only for Taunton.

## **6. Comparison with Charter Trustees Under Other Councils**

6.1 The following comparative information in Table 2 was obtained:

<b>Town</b>	<b>Duties/Responsibilities Of Trustees</b>	<b>Duties/Responsibilities Of the Mayor</b>	<b>How Long In Existence</b>	<b>Overseeing Council</b>	<b>Allowances</b>
Bournemouth	The Trustees are the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council Councillors representing the Wards falling wholly or partly within the historic boundary of the former Borough Council. The Trustees ensure the continuation of the civic, historic and ceremonial traditions of the former Borough of Bournemouth and is responsible for choosing a Mayor and Deputy Mayor from the appointed Trustees annually. Own the plate etc.	Their role is to chair full Council Meetings, preside over Citizenship Ceremonies, promote local businesses and charities, open events and welcome visitors. The role of Mayor is non-political.	Since 2019	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council	The Mayor and Deputy Mayor do not receive allocated allowances but there is a provision for out of the pocket expenses.
Durham and Framwelgate	The trust ensures the continuation of the civic traditions for the City of Durham and is responsible for choosing	The position is non-political and the ceremonial head of the city, and intended to benefit both the city and	Durham City Council was abolished in 2009.	Durham County Council	The Mayor receives £3,500 and the Deputy Mayor

	the Mayor and Deputy Mayor from the appointed trustees. The trustees are county councillors from within the Durham City boundaries.	its citizens. •attend civic and ceremonial functions and local community activities as he/she determines appropriate	Durham retained its city charter status through the appointment of charter trustees.		£1,500. This was not claimed last year.
Margate	Elect a Mayor. Empowered to pay the Mayor a reasonable allowance for the expenses of office. Safeguard the historic and ceremonial attributes of former boroughs. Whilst having no executive powers the Charter Trustee body is responsible for ensuring the continuance of the historical, ceremonial and social links of the Town. Members of the Charter Trustees are expected to support the Town and its Mayoralty.	Chair the meetings of Margate Charter Trustees and act in a ceremonial role at local, state and many other functions	Since 1974	Thanet District Council	Mayoral allowance is £12,000 and Deputy Mayor is £6,000.
Poole	The trust ensures the continuation of the civic historic and ceremonial traditions of the former Borough of Poole and is responsible for choosing a Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Sheriff from the appointed trustees annually. The trustees are the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council councillors representing the wards falling wholly or partly within the historic boundary of the former borough council. The Charter Trustee is a non-political and non-statutory body with the primary objective being to maintain and promote the historic and ceremonial traditions for the area.	Duties as Mayor include chairing all meetings of the Full Council, overseeing all citizenship ceremonies for people becoming British citizens in Poole and representing residents as their ambassador at the many functions she will attend in her mayoral year	Since 2019	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council	Civic parties do not receive an allowance from the Bournemouth and Poole Charter Trustees. However, there is provision for out of pocket expenses, £3000 for Poole CT's – Poole have to take into account they have a Civic party of three as they also have a Charter for the role of Sheriff, who is the Mayor-elect.
Worksop	The Worksop Charter Trustees comprise of all 18 Bassetlaw District Councillors who represent the six wards in Worksop, once elected to Bassetlaw, they automatically become a Charter Trustee. The Trustees meet formally on several occasions each year, they receive reports from the Mayor and	Chair the meetings of the Charter Trustees.	Since 1974	Bassetlaw District Council	Mayor receives £3,000 a year. Last year was the first year there was an allowance.

	Clerk, and they set an annual budget which covers the running cost of the Trustees. They make a formal precept for funds to the Bassetlaw District Council, in the same way that Parish and Town Councils do. The cost of the Trustees is paid for solely by the residents of Worksop, and the annual cost works out at just 1 pence per household.				
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**Table 2**

6.2 The Charter Trustees detailed in Table 2 above indicate a wide variety of approaches. In terms of recent creation, Bournemouth and Poole were both formed in 2019 and neither have allowances, whereas those of longer standing do, with Margate having an allowance of £12,000 a year. For the reasons outlined in 5.1 above, the Panel believe allowances continue to be appropriate in Taunton and the current sums are very similar to those paid in Durham and Framwelgate and Worksop.

Data from Bournemouth and Poole, indicates the number of engagements carried out by the Civic Parties of Bournemouth and Poole between 1 June 2019 and 16 March 2020 (suspended due to lockdown) as follows:

	Bournemouth Charter Trustees	Poole Charter Trustees
Mayor*	162	152
Deputy Mayor	20	7
Sheriff		20

**Table 3**

\* Note: Following the creation of BCP Council and the election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, the Chairman, now being the First Citizen of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, has undertaken engagements that historically the Mayors of Bournemouth and Poole would have attended.

## **7. Recommendations**

7.1 The Panel understand that we are all experiencing unusual times and that this has impacted a little upon the role of Mayor and Deputy Mayor towards the end of their first year. Nevertheless, the number of functions carried out has been less than was expected and particularly so in the case of the Deputy Mayor.

Accordingly, the Panel recommends that:  
the allowance for Mayor remain as it is, whilst that of the Deputy should be reduced by half to reflect the reduced workload;  
the index linking of the allowance be retained;  
the situation be reviewed again in a year, when hopefully 'normal' (post

Covid-19) activity has taken place.

John Thomson

Chair, Independent Remuneration Panel

5 October 2020