



REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

FOR

**VALE OF WHITE HORSE AND SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE PARISH AND TOWN
COUNCILS**

FEBRUARY 2017

South East Employers
2 Crown Walk
Jewry Street
Winchester
Hampshire
SO23 8BB

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Report from the Parish and Town Councils Independent Remuneration Panel February 2017

1. Introduction

The Parish Remuneration Panel was convened by Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils as the 'Responsible Authority' so required by the 2003 Regulations:

The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 Statutory Instrument 2003 No. 1021 and the amendment – Statutory Instrument 2003 No. 1692

The Guidance issued on these regulations for Parish Allowances/ or Members of Parish Council is:

“91. Parish councils may choose to pay their members an allowance, known as ‘parish basic allowance’, to recognise the time and effort they put into their parish duties. There is no obligation on parish councils to pay such allowances. Each parish council may make an allowance available to its chair only, or to each of its members. Where all members receive an allowance, the amount payable to the chair may be different to that paid to other members, but otherwise the amount paid to each member must be the same. Parish basic allowance is a discretionary allowance. It may be paid in a lump sum, or at intervals throughout the year.

92. If a parish council wishes to pay a basic allowance, it should have regard to a recommendation from its parish remuneration panel. This is a panel set up to make recommendations to parishes in its area. The membership of a parish remuneration panel will be the same as the independent remuneration panel of the district or county council within whose area the parish is situated. The panel will make a recommendation as to whom basic allowance should be paid, and the level of the allowance.”

(New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Regulation for Local Authority Allowances, DCLG, 2003)

2. Terms of Reference

The Panel was asked to consider and make recommendations to Parish Councils regarding:

- Basic Allowance
- Chairman's Allowance
- Travel and Subsistence Allowance
- Indexing

The Parish Independent Remuneration Panel

The Parish Independent Remuneration Panel comprised of the same membership as the Independent Remuneration Panel which met on 18th, 25th and 26th January 2017 to review the allowances for Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils and the members of the panel are set out below:

The Panel comprised the following members:

- Mark Palmer, Development Director, South East Employers (Chairman)
- David Whittingham, Chief Executive, Oxford Brookes University and local resident
- Ian Snowdon- Local resident
- Keith Brooks – Local resident

The Panel met on the 18th, 25th and 26th January 2017 The Panel meeting was held in private session.

3. Approach

All Parish and Town Councils were invited to provide views and the opportunity to take part in a consultation workshop that took place on the 26th January 2017. The workshop informed participants of the legislation and sought participant views in respect of the Parish Basic Allowance, the Chairman's Allowance, Travel and Subsistence and the indexing of allowances.

A questionnaire (Appendix 1) was also sent to each Parish and Town Council; 29 Parish and Town Councils responded and a total of 58 individuals completed the questionnaire. The Panel would like the opportunity to thank all those who completed the questionnaire and/or attended the consultation workshop.

The Panel paid close attention to the Government Guidance.

4. Arriving at the Recommendations

The Panel noted that only one of the Councils that responded currently awarded an allowance and only 8 of the respondents felt that they should receive an allowance.

The Panel was of the view that whilst parish councillors did not stand for office for any financial reward, an allowance could actively support someone in the councillor role and that it was essential to be able to attract parish councillors from a wide range of backgrounds. Councillors should also not be out of pocket for undertaking the role.

5. Recommendations

Basic Allowance

The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 Statutory Instrument 2003 No. 1021 state the basic allowance recommended by a Parish Independent Remuneration Panel can be for any amount up to 100 per cent of the basic allowance paid by Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils.

The Panel therefore recommends that those parishes who feel that a basic allowance would be appropriate should be able to pay an amount up to 5% of the Basic Allowance of Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Council.

The recommended Basic Allowance for the Councils for 2017/18 is £4,633; 5% of this is **£232. This should in accordance with the statutory regulations only be paid to Members who are elected not those co-opted.**

Chairman's Allowance.

The Panel felt that any decision regarding the payment of a Chairman's Allowance should be left entirely to the discretion of individual parish councils, taking into account local circumstances.

The Panel therefore recommends the Chairman's Allowance should be up to 15% of the District Councils Basic Allowance (namely £695). This could be in addition to the Basic Allowance, or not, if no Basic Allowance is paid.

Travel and Subsistence.

The Panel recommends that the Parish Councils should pay a mileage allowance of 45p per mile (for a car) which is in line with the HMRC recommendations, the same as the District Councils. Subsistence rates should also be paid in line with the District Councils.

Indexation of Allowances

The indexation of the allowances paid to Members of the parish and town councils should be in accordance with the indexation applied to Members' Allowances at the District Councils. The agreed approach to indexation is in line with District Councils staff salary increases.

Forgoing Allowances.

A parish/town councillor may choose not to receive all or part of any allowance to which they would otherwise be entitled. To do so they must give written notice to the proper officer of the parish/town council.

Publicity

With regard to the allowances, the Panel recommends that the Parish Councils act in accordance with the following guidance (Section 5, Paragraph 30 of the Regulations (SI2003 No. 1021) :

“Parish councils are required to publicise their allowances in a notice or notices conspicuous in their area. These notices must remain in place for at least 14 days. In addition, they must make a record of the allowances they have paid available for inspection at reasonable notice. They must provide copies of this record on request, and may charge a reasonable fee for this. Parishes must also publish details of the parish remuneration panel reports. Again, these are minimum requirements, and parish councils may wish to go further in making local people aware of their allowances scheme and payment levels. For example they may wish to circulate details of their allowances in the parish newsletter, if they have one, place them on a website, or publish them in one or more local newspapers.”

The Panel recommends that the Parish Clerk should also publicise the allowances scheme to all Parish Councillors

Implementation

The Panel recommends the new allowances should be implemented from April 2017.

Mark Palmer
Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel
February 2017