

APPENDIX 5

Independent Remuneration Panel – Members and Officers Interviewed

All Councillors were invited to meet the Panel if they so wished

Six interviews were held between 16 February and 24 February with a total of 16 participants. In most cases the whole Panel took part in each session

a) Officers and Councillors interviewed

NAME	POSITION / WARD
Glenn Chipp	Chief Executive, HDC
Jane Eaton	Head of Corporate Services, HDC
Cllr Matthew Allen	Broadbridge Heath
Cllr Andrew Baldwin	Holbrook East
Cllr Toni Bradnum	Nuthurst & Lower Beeding
Cllr Peter Burgess	Holbrook West
Cllr Jonathan Chowen	Deputy Leader, HDC
Cllr Philip Circus	West Chiltington, Thakeham & Ashington
Cllr Paul Clarke	Pulborough, Coldwaltham & Amberley
Cllr Ray Dawe	Leader, HDC
Cllr Brian Donnelly	Chairman of Planning (South) /Standards
Cllr Frances Haigh	Leader Opposition
Cllr Liz Kitchen	Rusper, Chairman of Planning (North)
Cllr Gordon Lindsay	Southwater South & Shipley
Cllr Roger Noel	Bramber, Upper Beeding & Woodmancote
Cllr Louise Potter	Broadbridge Heath

b) Summary of key points arising from interviews

- **Workload and working practices**
 - Most agreed that there has been an increase in the day-to-day work with an increasing amount of time spent in smaller meetings and one-to-one contacts. Also noted that home-based costs, including services, utilities and printing costs have grown since less is now being done at the office. Not expecting a full return to pre-Covid working practices, so home costs likely to remain higher, and the work/life balance shift will continue.
 - Councillors feel they are more readily contacted now and that social media and e-mails are used more extensively by residents and officers. Feeling that this carries an expectation of swift response and brings a risk that they are 'on duty' for more of the time. The increased use of Zoom, social media etc was already being established before the current restrictions and the general feeling is that this will continue.

- Less travelling undertaken, which is a time saving, but a missing element is the informal, spontaneous discussion that results from physically meeting colleagues and officers.
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- **Basic Allowance**

- All were at pains to clarify that financial incentive is not the primary driver for taking up the Councillor role which is generally felt to be adequate for the purpose intended. However an allowance is seen as recognition of the importance and status of the role.
- All recognised the scope of expenses that the Basic Allowance was intended to cover and that an element of unpaid commitment was expected. As with SRAs, below, the differential between Borough / District Council allowances and those available to Unitary and County Councillors was acknowledged. One interviewee commented that this is justified since most wards have 2 or 3 District Councillors, whereas County Members are the sole Divisional presence and thus shoulder all of the work locally.
- Several commented that not all Councillors are fully meeting the obligations of the role and may be less active in the community and attendance at meetings can be patchy. Where they hold a Chairmanship or similar role this requires a greater commitment and carries greater accountability. Ultimately, political parties and electorate are those that can do something about under-achievement.

- **SRAs**

- General agreement that these were a key acknowledgement of the additional work, responsibility and impact associated with the principle roles.
- Whilst most are seen as appropriate, some senior posts – Leader, Deputy and Cabinet members were felt to merit a larger allowance – more or less a full time commitment and carry a lot of responsibility, accountability and have to manage criticism and challenge effectively.
- Also noted by some that for Overview & Scrutiny, as a key committee with a high workload and significant role in business practice and council reputation, the Chairman's SRA is relatively low. Whilst the Chair of O&S is conventionally appointed from the

minority parties, the Vice Chair is a majority member and acts as a key political channel for the political group – SRA for this role is also seen as justified.

- Governance was seen, by some, as a relatively less active committee and there was some question about whether the current allowance might be disproportionately high compared with other, busier committees.
- There was some questioning of the extent to which Committee Vice Chairmen had an active enough role to merit an allowance. Acknowledged that this will vary according to individual Chairman's availability and needs to be established against the role rather than current incumbents, but may be a consideration for a revised approach (e.g. an 'Acting-up" payment when Chairman is absent).
- Noted, and questioned in most interviews, that WSCC equivalents are considerably better rewarded, though the workload is not seen as substantially different. Under the 1972 Local Government Act, the two tiers of council deliver services according to the most appropriate choice between local and countywide. No fundamental difference in the processes, decision making and governance was seen that would justify such a variation in allowances.

- **Other allowances**

- Planning is acknowledged as a key, high profile function with a considerable public impact, the HDC format, with all Councillors involved mitigates against any consideration for an allowance for all Committee members – seen as a key part of the basic role and an area for learning and gaining experience. No other committees were considered.
- There was some discussion about whether Deputy Cabinet members should be considered for an SRA (not currently included). The general view was opposed to this and the role was seen as a privilege and a valuable training opportunity. However one suggestion was for an occasional allowance payable when the deputy attends on behalf of the Cabinet member.
- A case was made for the role of Armed Forces Champion to be considered for an allowance, on the basis that it does require at least one meeting a month to be attended – estimated by the current holder as around 5 hours per work on average. There was however no general consensus that this should be introduced.
- Approved attendance by HD Councillors on external bodies was discussed in each interview and the Gatwick and South Downs National Park roles were the only active ones identified. Neither

currently receives a SRA, though SDNP provides an attendees allowance itself. Normal travel and subsistence are claimable. There was no appetite for these to be considered, though there was one view that the lack of an allowance might be a factor in the number of currently unfilled Council representative roles on external bodies.

- Some support for looking at these representative roles as an attendance allowance (£XX per meeting) as opposed to a fixed annual sum, which might stimulate interest in unfilled roles.
- Noted that much of what Councillors get involved with is a consequence of being a Councillor and therefore part of the basic job. Attendance at parish Councils is seen as part of this core role and not meriting separate financial reward.
- Some newer Councillors advised that they were unaware of the allowances available, which may suggest a refreshed awareness message for clarification.

- **Travel and other allowances**

- All agreed with the principle of travel and subsistence payments to continue reflecting those offered to officers, and included in the annual settlements accordingly. These should remain claim-based.
- General support for the continued offer of a Carers' allowance, though need to be clear that this is for paid / professional care required to release time for Councillors to meet their council and constituency obligations. Generally agreed that this should not include claiming for family members where the care would have been delivered anyway. The appropriate amount of allowance was more difficult to determine, since care can range from child-minding to significant professional care, with costs varying accordingly. At the least, this should reflect the Minimum Living Wage.
- No other areas that might be considered for such allowances were identified.

- **Review and increase mechanisms**

- General agreement with the four-yearly review process as established, and of which this is a part, but some support for the idea of linking all allowances to the annual pay settlements and increasing or not in line with staff pay and benefits. This was agreed as more politically manageable than more significant changes on a less frequent basis, or changes that might lead to

public challenge at a time of economic constraints and potentially service impacts arising from Covid19.

- Interviewees were asked to consider how the appropriate level for SRAs might be assessed. Time spent is not generally seen as an effective measure for setting or reviewing levels of allowances. More important to assess responsibility, though recognise that this is difficult to codify as an effective tool. Agreed that the relative workload of the Committees could be used as a basis for allowance setting but no specific suggestions for change were offered.

- **Incentives for attracting younger or less affluent Councillors**

- Recognised that the council is heavily weighted towards older people who have more financial and time capacity to commit. Generally agreed that more younger people are needed, but juggling work, family and council commitments is very challenging and the allowances are insufficient to encourage reducing paid employment to fulfil time demands.
- Timing of council meetings also seen as an obstacle – 17.30 typically which is likely to clash with work time and after-school and family commitments. A later start to meetings might mitigate this for some.
- Newer Councillors advised that the level of workload involved was not that clear when standing. Perhaps more clarity on this might be helpful.
- Suggested that those authorities with a more representative profile might be approached to ascertain how this is achieved.

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