

REPORT TO
SOLIHULL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
BY
THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

REVIEW OF SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES FOR MINORITY
POLITICAL GROUP LEADERS

December 2020

FOREWORD

To the Chief Executive and Members of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

The Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Independent Remuneration Panel was established under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 to provide advice and recommendations to the Council on amounts to be paid under its Members' Allowances scheme. Members of the Panel are appointed by the Council and are independent members of the local community.

Following receipt of our report and recommendations for the payment of Members' Allowances for 2020-21 and 2021-22 in March 2020, the Council's Governance Committee requested a further review of the Special Responsibility Allowances payable to the leaders of the minority political groups. This report is presented to the Council in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. In conducting this review, the Independent Remuneration Panel has had regard to the 2006 Statutory Guidance on Members Allowances.

The Council is required to have regard to our recommendations in deciding what allowances to pay Councillors. These recommendations seek to ensure that the Members' Allowances Scheme is fair, transparent and provides a clarity and consistency in terms of the positions eligible to receive allowances.

The Council must publish our recommendations and conclusions, together with the approved scheme of allowances.

Russell Downing

Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel

December 2020

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCILLORS' REMUNERATION

1. The Independent Remuneration Panel

- 1.1.1 The current members of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) were appointed by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) in October 2016 for the purpose of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.
- 1.1.2 The members of the IRP are shown in Appendix 1 (page 6).
- 1.1.3 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 enable allowances schemes to make provision for Councillors' Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances, pensions, travelling and subsistence allowances and co-optees allowances and it falls to the IRP to make recommendations about these matters.
- 1.1.4 It is for the Council to decide on the Members' Allowances Scheme that is put in place, having regard to the Panel's recommendations.

2. Scope of this Report

- 2.1.1 In March 2020 the Independent Remuneration Panel concluded a review of the Members' Allowances Scheme and made recommendations to the Council for the period 2020 – 2022.
- 2.1.2 Following receipt of our report and recommendations for the payment of Members' Allowances for 2020-21 and 2021-22 in March 2020, the Council's Governance Committee requested a further review of the Special Responsibility Allowances payable to the leaders of the minority political groups.
- 2.1.3 This report sets out our recommendations for the Special Responsibility Allowances payable to the leaders of the minority political groups.

3. Information provided to the Panel

- 3.1.1 The Panel met in November 2020 and also liaised outside of the meeting. The Panel was provided with the following information:
 - The current political make-up and political management arrangements of the Council.
 - Benchmarking data on Special Responsibility Allowances paid to political group leaders by other metropolitan authorities within the West Midlands.
- 3.1.2 The Panel invited the Leaders of each of the political groups on the Council to raise any aspects of the allowances that they wished to bring to the attention of the IRP. No points were put forward by the political group leaders for consideration.

3.1.3 The current political composition of the Council as at November 2020 is:

Party	Number of Seats
Conservative	26
Green	14
Liberal Democrat	5
Labour	3
Independent	2
Vacancy	1
Total Members	51

3.1.4 The current allowance rates were set by the Council on 7th July 2020 after having regard to the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel dated March 2020.

3.1.5 The Special Responsibility Allowances currently payable are as follows:

Leader of the Council	£23,740
Group Leader (10 or more Councillors)	£9,496
Group Leader (5-9 Councillors)	£4,748
Group Leader (less than 5 Councillors)	£2,375

3.1.6 These allowances are payable in addition to the Basic Allowance of £9,750 which every Councillor receives.

3.1.7 The Panel noted the statutory Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances. The guidance provides that a Special responsibility allowance (SRA) may be paid to those members of the Council who have significant additional responsibilities, over and above the generally accepted duties of a Councillor. These special responsibilities must be related to the discharge of the authority's functions.

3.1.8 The Panel acknowledged the importance of a robust political opposition in ensuring transparency and accountability of executive decision making in a local authority. The Panel recognizes the significant responsibility of the Leader of the Opposition political group in this democratic process.

3.1.9 The current allowance for the Leader of a Group with 10 or more Councillors (at present applicable to the official opposition leader on the Council) is set at the equivalent rate to that payable to a Cabinet member (£9,496), which the Panel consider to be appropriate based on the level of responsibility of this role.

3.1.10 The Council's scheme provides a smaller allowance of £4,748 for the Leader of a group with 5-9 Councillors, and an allowance of £2,375 for the Leader a group with less than 5 Councillors.

3.1.11 The Panel considered the level of additional responsibility carried by the Leader of a smaller minority political group and concluded that in terms of the overall discharge of the Council's functions, the responsibility of the leader of a smaller minority group was not significant.

3.1.12 The Panel noted that the Solihull MBC Members' Allowances Scheme is more inclusive than any other of the West Midlands metropolitan authorities in that it is

the only Scheme to provide a Group Leader's Allowance for a political group with less than 5 members.

- 3.1.13 The Independent Remuneration Panel therefore recommends that the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Leaders of the minority political groups be retained at the current rates.

SOLIHULL INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL MEMBERS

Mr David Billingham

David is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. He has over 30 years' experience in Human Resources including a number of years as a consultant with Price Waterhouse and as Human Resources Director for Serco Local Government & Commercial. Most recently he was interim Director of HR Transformation and interim Director of Talent & Development for Mitie plc. David is a resident of Solihull Borough and has been a member of the Independent Remuneration Panel since 2007."

Mr Russell Downing (Chairman)

Russell is currently an Independent Associate to one of the UK's lead technology companies specialising in Building Automation Services. He has over 30 years' experience working for corporate information and control technology companies, holding project management positions. He is extensively trained with enforcing the companies compliance procedures in line with UK and European law. He is also an elected Trustee for a Pension Fund of one of the UK's leading electrical manufacturing companies. He is a resident of Solihull Borough and joined the Independent Remuneration in 2016. He is currently Chairman of the Panel.

Mrs Patricia Smith

Patricia is a retired resident of Solihull and a non-executive director and vice-chair of Solihull Community Housing, where she is a member of the Audit and Risk Committee.

She was previously chair of the Colebridge Trust and was involved in its inception. Although no longer playing an active role she maintains a real interest in its ongoing development, and she was also involved in Waterloo Woodwork and Community Transport. Patricia was appointed as a member of the Independent Remuneration Panel in 2016.

Dr Nerys Williams

Nerys is a Consultant Occupational Physician and former non-executive director at Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust. She works as a civil servant and as an Associate for the General Medical Council. She is a resident of Solihull Borough and has been a member of the Independent Remuneration Panel since its inception in 2003.