

PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

6 February 2025

Present:-

Councillors J Hart (Chair), Y Atkinson, S Hughes, J McInnes and C Whitton

Apologies:-

Councillors J Hodgson and C Leaver

In attendance (virtual) Councillor F Biederman (substitute)

* **81** **Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members they should declare any interests they may have in any item to be considered, prior to any discussion taking place on that item. The details of District and or Town and Parish Twin Hatters was on the attached list - [County councillors who are also district, borough, city, parish or town councillors](#)

* **82** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2024 be signed as a correct record.

83 **Items requiring urgent attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

84 **Report of the Independent Members Allowances Remuneration Panel for 2025/2026**

The Committee considered the Report of the Independent Members' Allowances Remuneration Panel for 2025/2026.

Mr Barriball, on behalf of the Panel, presented their Report, highlighting specifically that the conclusions and recommendations made had been based on sound evidence and that they had given consideration to the issues asked of them as well as the national position with the cost of living, the impact on communities as well as the operations and finances of the Council. He further thanked Panel colleagues, Councillor's and Officers for their support and contributions during the review.

Members welcomed the Panel's acknowledgment in the Report that while historically there had been little scope for improvement, the structure of the County Council's scheme remained fit for purpose with sound principles and

noted that, in commending its Report to the Council, the Panel had not suggested any significant changes to the structure of the Council's scheme.

The Panel had recommended that the basic allowance rise by 1.11% to £15,250, in line with their previously agreed formula. The Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) multipliers would be readjusted accordingly. In the previous years, the staff pay award had been used as a benchmark but given this had been a lump sum payment of £1,925 for both 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 and £1920 for 2024/2025, it was felt this was not appropriate.

They further recommended, based on the benchmarking and evidence obtained, that the Land and Property Committee Chair be given an SRA of 0.25. No further changes were recommended to the SRA structure.

The Panel had also reviewed the overnight accommodation rate for London and were recommending an increase to £204.

The recommended allowances (with effect from 2025) were set out in the amended Appendix 1 of the Report, as circulated at the meeting.

The Committee placed on record its thanks to the Panel for their hard work and very comprehensive Report.

Members commented as follows: recognition that Devon was one of the higher paid authorities for member allowances within the benchmarking table but that allowances for members nationally were low; asked about member engagement in the process and the Panel felt this had been reasonably good; and the recommendations were felt to be sensible.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hart, **SECONDED** by Councillor Atkinson, and

RESOLVED

(a) that the basic structure of the current scheme be endorsed and retained;

(b) to note that the Panel feels it important not to depart from its established formula of calculating the basic allowance and therefore recommend to the Council that the basic allowance increases by 1.11% to £15,250 to take effect from May 2025 and the multipliers be recalculated accordingly, based on the Panel's standard formula and other benchmarking;

(c) that, based on the benchmarking and reasoning (as shown in section 8 of the report), the Land and Property Committee Chair be given an SRA of 0.25;

(d) that the overnight rate for London be increased to £204, in line with the methodology and reasoning outlined in paragraph 7.2 and that a more suitable benchmark be researched;

(e) that consideration be given to a review of the approved duties for travelling and subsistence claims and to also encourage all Members who are eligible to claim for expenses to do so;

(f) that the sustained reduction in the number of SRA's be welcomed and that the levels be kept below the 50% threshold, as is currently the case;

(g) that the information in Elections literature be made clearer, especially with regard to the payment of allowances, the public sector discount and the status of access to the LGPS, noting that these are matters that Group Leaders may wish to ensure are brought to the attention of prospective candidates;

(h) that the continued work being undertaken to support the LGA's debate not hate campaign be supported and welcomed;

(i) that the Panel reiterate their desire that Group Leaders continue to take a robust approach to the performance management of their Members' and places on record their thanks for the levels of reassurance provided by Group Leaders for dealing with performance issues; and

(j) that the Panel place on record their appreciation to Councillors for their continued Leadership and tireless working in their communities, especially given concerns raised throughout the Report, in terms of workload and added pressures of increased abuse and intimidation.

* 85 **Public Participation - Review of the Governance Working Group and Proposed Changes to Development Management and Highways and Traffic Orders Committee Participation Processes.**

The Committee considered the Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (LDS/25/3) outlining proposed changes to public participation processes.

The Report outlined that the Council's public participation guidance had been in existence for a number of years, with the ability for members of the public to engage with the democratic processes of the Council, highlighting the various updates over the years.

The Committee noted that with the formation of the Governance Working Group in 2023, it had been agreed that Public Participation formed a dedicated work strand as part of the work programme. Officers had reviewed and considered revised public participation guidance and the Procedures Committee, as its meeting on 26 September 2023, agreed a number of minor changes to the Council's public participation guidance, outlined in full in the Report.

Since the agreement of those changes, a number of other issues had come to the fore. The main changes proposed to the scheme, was outlined in the appendix to the Report, denoted in red type, and deleted words with a

strikethrough. The further additions in purple were as suggested and agreed by the Governance Working Group when it considered the matter.

The Committee noted there were no changes proposed to the deadlines on submitting representations or questions, as the benchmarking data showed that the Council had reasonably long deadlines when compared to others.

Views had also been sought from the Chair of the Council's Development Management Committee and Officers working within the Planning Team.

Members raised the following matters: amending the wording about circulating information to make this clearer that officers would not be doing this on the public's behalf; concerns around members being unduly swayed by comments in meetings and reviewing operation of committee meetings; and the need to ensure everybody has a voice.

The amended wording paragraph 6 of part 2 was agreed as *'Democratic Services Officers are not permitted to circulate information to the Committee on behalf of the public'*.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hughes **SECONDED** by Councillor Whitton and

RESOLVED that the proposed changes to the Council's Public Participation guidance, attached at appendix 1, with the addition agreed at the meeting (outlined above) be recommended to the Council for adoption and publication on the Council's website.

NOTES:

1. *Minutes should always be read in association with any Reports for a complete record.*
2. *If the meeting has been webcast, it will be available to view on the [webcasting site](#) for up to 12 months from the date of the meeting*

* **DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.28 am