



**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL
FOR
HART PARISH COUNCILS**

JANUARY 2016

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Report from the Parish Councils Independent Remuneration Panel January 2016

1. Introduction

The Parish Remuneration Panel was convened by Hart District Council 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 and 19th January 2016 to review the allowances for Hart District Council and the members of the panel are set out below:

The Panel comprised the following members:

- Mark Palmer, Development Director, South East Employers (Chairman)
- Caroline Winchurch, Chief Executive, Hart Voluntary Action
- Peter Moore, Independent Person for Hart DC.

The Panel met at the District Council Offices on 19th January 2016. The Panel meeting was held in private session so as to enable the Panel to undertake any interviews in confidence.

3. Approach

All Parish Councils were invited to provide views and the opportunity for an interview in respect of the Parish Basic Allowance, the Chairman's Allowance, Travel and Subsistence and the indexing of allowances.

As well as the responses and comments received and the information obtained from the single interview, the Panel paid close attention to the Government Guidance.

4. Arriving at the Recommendations

During their interview, the Panel noted that use of allowances varied between parish councils

The Panel heard 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. The Panel concurs with the view expressed by the single interviewee that Councillors should not be out of pocket.

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 Hart District Council.

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 10% of the Basic Allowance for Hart District Council.

The Basic Allowance for Hart District Council 2016/17 is £4,561; 10% of this is **£456**. This should 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 Council's Basic Allowance (namely £684). 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.

Withdrawal of Allowances

The Panel recommends that where a member is suspended or partially suspended, all or part of their allowance should be withheld. This would also apply to Travel and Subsistence allowances.

Forgoing Allowances.

A parish 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 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.”

Implementation

The Panel recommends the change to the basic allowance should be implemented with immediate effect.

Indexing

The Panel has recommended that Hart District Council's Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances should continue to be increased annually by the percentage cost of living increase awarded to members of staff.

Given the recommendations of the Panel for Basic Allowance and Chairman's Allowance for Parish Councils are based on the District Council's Basic Allowance, the Panel also recommends that Parish Council Basic and Chairman's Allowances should be indexed in the same way.

Publication

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

Appendix One

Panel Interviewees

- Anne Atkins – Clerk of Hook Parish Council