

Norfolk County Council

Extraordinary Meeting

Date: **Monday 8 January 2018**

Time: **10.00 a.m**

Venue: **Council Chamber, County Hall, Norwich**

Persons attending the meeting are requested to turn off mobile phones.

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Prayers

To Call the Roll

AGENDA

1. **To receive any announcements from the Chairman**
2. **Members to Declare any Interests**

If you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter to be considered at the meeting and that interest is on your Register of Interests you must not speak or vote on the matter. It is recommended that you declare that interest but it is not a legal requirement.

If you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter to be considered at the meeting and that interest is not on your Register of Interests you must declare that interest at the meeting and not speak or vote on the matter.

In either case you may remain in the room where the meeting is taking place. If you consider that it would be inappropriate in the circumstances to remain in the room, you may leave the room while the matter is dealt with.

If you do not have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest you may nevertheless have an Other Interest in a matter to be discussed if it affects:

- your well being or financial position
- that of your family or close friends
- that of a club or society in which you have a management role
- that of another public body of which you are a member to a greater extent than others in your ward.

If that is the case then you must declare such an interest but can speak and vote on the matter.

3 Notice of Motion:

Proposed by Mr S Morphew and seconded by Mr D Roper:

“Council agrees to rescind the resolution passed at Council on 11 December 2017 relating to Councillor allowances and accept the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel”.

(A copy of the report considered by Council at its meeting on 11 December 2017 is attached).

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For further details and general enquiries about this Agenda please contact the Assistant Head of Democratic Services: Greg Insull on 01603 223100 or email greg.insull@norfolk.gov.uk

Independent Remuneration Panel

Review of Norfolk County Council Members' Allowances Scheme

PANEL MEMBERS

Mr Alan Howard (Chairman)
Mr Peter Franzen OBE
Professor John Last
Mr David Morgan

November 2017

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The last review of Members Allowances was carried out in 2014. In recommending a Scheme, the Panel also recommended that the next full review take place in 2017, with any resulting changes being implemented from April 2018.
- 1.2 The County Council accepted the Panel's recommendation regarding the next review. It is therefore necessary to undertake a full review of the Scheme.

2.0 PANEL OBJECTIVES AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 2.1 The Panel's previously agreed objectives and terms of reference are as follows:

The objective is to make recommendations to the Council on:-

- (i) The level of Basic Allowance to be paid to all Norfolk County Councillors;
- (ii) The posts for which Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) should be paid and the level of those SRAs;
- (iii) The appropriateness of continuing to pay a Carer's Allowance and the rate at which it should be paid;
- (iv) Whether allowances should be paid to co-opted Members and if so, at what level;
- (v) The terms of travel and subsistence allowances for members.

All these issues are subject to consideration and recommendation by the Panel.

- 2.2 The Panel's agreed terms of reference are:-

To make recommendations on a scheme of payments to councillors which:-

- (i) conforms with legislation;
- (ii) recognises that the work of a councillor is undertaken for the sake of public service and not for private gain;
- (iii) recognises the demands placed upon councillors by their differing roles and responsibilities within the Council and fairly and equitably compensates them for the time and effort they devote to their work as a member of the Council;

(iv) is simple to administer and easy to explain and justify to the public.

3.0 PROCESS

3.1 The Panel undertook the following process

Stage 1 - 21 September 2017

- General discussion of the reports and issues
- Discussed the implications for this review of a proposal by the ruling Administration to switch to a Cabinet system of governance in May 2019
- Identified any additional information that it required to assist in reaching conclusions on particular issues
- Considered inviting the group leaders to submit representations about the review and to attend a meeting with the Panel

Stage 2 – 24 October 2017

- Met and questioned two Group Leaders and considered additional information provided including the written submissions from two of the Group Leaders.
- Reached final conclusions and decisions on all issues

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

4.1 That the Council considers the attached report on the review of allowances and the recommendations contained within it.

BASIC ALLOWANCE

- 1.1 The requirement and basis for a Basic Allowance is set out in Government Guidance. Local Authorities must include in their schemes of allowances a basic, flat rate allowance, payable to all their elected members. It must be the same for each member.
- 1.2 The guidance advises reaching a conclusion as to the number of hours that members need in order to carry out the role expected of them. The guidance also advises that some element of members' work be regarded as voluntary and consequently that not all their time should be remunerated. However the guidance advises this be balanced against the need to ensure that financial loss is not suffered by members, and to ensure that despite the input required, people are encouraged to come forward as elected members and that their service to the community is retained. Finally the guidance advises that independent remuneration panels consider rates at which it would be appropriate for remunerated time to be paid.
- 1.3 An Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) Census in the autumn of 2010 found that the figure for county councillors for the basic role was 21.2 hours per week. Unfortunately there has been no such councillor census since then.
- 1.4 The Panel has previously considered that the position on hours necessary should link to the hours per week identified in the IDeA survey. The Panel recognised that some members will spend more time than others in carrying out their role but the Panel had an expectation that members should generally not be spending less than the IDeA average of 21.2 hours per week on their basic county council duties.
- 1.5 The Panel has previously reflected carefully on what proportion of the 21.2 hours should not be remunerated to reflect a public service element. On balance, the Panel considered that a 30% reduction was a fair and reasonable assessment and one that members of the council and the general public would be satisfied with.
- 1.6 In terms of the hourly rate to be applied, the Panel felt that the average gross hourly rate for all full-time employee jobs in Norfolk set out in the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings produced by the Office of National Statistics was an appropriate one to use for considering an indicator. The rate then was £13.59. In the 2017 survey it is now £14.42 in Norfolk. For comparison purposes, the Panel noted other rates as follows:
 - UK - £16.95
 - England - £17.20
 - East Region - £17.68
 - Cambs - £18.31
 - Essex - £18.47
 - Herts - £20.64

- Suffolk - £16.07

1.7 The rate of £9,018 recommended by the Panel was accepted by the County Council. Since then, as recommended by the Panel, the allowance has increased each year in line with the employee pay awards and is currently £9,401 per annum. In terms of some of the key indicators which the guidance advises be considered, the present position is as follows:-

1.8 Comparative figures for the Basic Allowance were been obtained from all County Councils. From these figures can be seen that Norfolk's present basic allowance (£9,401) is at a rate of 87% of the average of county councils (£10,793).

1.9 The numbers of candidates standing at the last four County Council Elections were as follows:-

May 2005	-	312 candidates
June 2009	-	322 candidates
May 2013	-	358 candidates
May 2017	-	362 candidates

1.10 At each of the above Elections all 84 divisions were contested, so a fair comparison can be made which shows the number of candidates to be increasing. We also considered demographic information on the age profile of the new Council. Whilst this does not directly mirror the population, it was encouraging insofar as it was not as far out of line as we would have expected.

2.0 CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 There is a requirement to review the level of basic allowance.

2.2 When the Basic Allowance was set by the Council in 2013 it was at a rate of 90% of the county council average. The rate now (£9,401) stands at 87% of the average of all county councils (£10,793), so Norfolk's allowance appears to have declined slightly in comparative terms. Retaining the 90% rate would require an increase of £313 to £9,714 (increase of 3.3%).

2.3 Making a formula calculation based on the present relevant hourly rate indicator (£14.42) and retaining the previous position on hours necessary (21.2) and voluntary discount element (30%) would set the allowance at £11,170 which would be an increase of £1,769 (18.8%) on the present level.

3.0 OPTIONS

- Use the same formula as used previously (increase as in para 2.3);

- Revise formula calculation in respect of hours needed;
- Revise formula calculation in respect of voluntary element;
- Revise formula calculation in respect of appropriate hourly wage rate;
- Not use formula but increase Basic Allowance to bring more in line with other authorities;
- Reduce the Basic allowance;
- No change to Allowance and continue with the present policy of only increasing in line with the local government employee pay award pending the implementation of the Cabinet system in May 2019

4. POLITICAL GROUP REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 The political group leaders were invited to make representations to the Panel regarding the Basic Allowance. In addition the group leaders were asked if they wished to meet the Panel in order to support their representations. Two of the three group leaders took up the invitation and met the Panel.

4.2 The following representations were made that related to the Basic Allowance.

- (i) There needs to be a major increase in the basic allowance. This has not increased for many years and does not give due recognition to the work that Councillors undertake on a daily basis. Many Councillors cannot afford to travel round their divisions helping local residents as they are supposed to do. The basic allowance does not cover the basic duties of Councillors. The Group Leader suggested that there be a major uplift of allowances across the board. The work of Councillors has changed beyond all recognition. People expect a Councillor to come when they call and need help. It is vital that they have remuneration in keeping with the work that they are expected to do.
- (ii) Whilst accepting that the guidance advises that some element of members' work be regarded as voluntary and consequently that not all their time should be remunerated, there should be a recognition that this has a material effect on the ability of some low paid people to take on the role of a Councillor. It was suggested that if an individual Councillor earned a salary below a certain level, then they could ask to receive a basic allowance without the 30% public service discount.
- (iii) The basic allowance should be flexible enough to reflect the workloads and costs associated with being a Councillor in a rural area – in particular the number of Parish Councils that expected their County Councillor to attend and the distances travelled to meet residents.

4.3 Views of the Panel on Representations Received

(i) The Panel accepted the view in representation 1 that the role of Councillor had changed in recent years and consequently that the Basic Allowance was in need of a fundamental review. This exercise had to be based on strong evidence and the Panel did not feel that at this stage they had sufficient robust data to allow them to come to a firm conclusion. In addition, they were

very mindful of the intention to move to a Cabinet System in May 2019 and they considered that work should be undertaken as soon as possible in preparation for a new system of allowances which would be required in 2019/20.

(ii) Whilst recognising the desirability of ensuring Councillors are as far as is possible representative of the community of Norfolk as a whole, regulations provide that the basic allowance must be the same for all members and therefore this proposal in representation (ii) would not be lawful.

(iii) The same restrictions apply as in (ii) above in that the basic allowance must be the same for all members and therefore this proposal would not be lawful.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The Panel accepts that the basic allowance requires a fundamental review, including considering whether there are more appropriate methodologies in arriving at a final figure. We think that citizens' expectations are rising with regard to Councillors in line with their general expectations of the public and private sectors – for example they expect to be able to access Members more readily and expect a quicker response. However, the Panel is mindful of 2 factors:

(i) The stated aim of the Administration to revert to a Cabinet system as soon as lawfully possible (May 2019). This will involve changes to council structures and to the roles of Members. It will also require a fundamental review of all allowances, so any scheme recommended by the Panel and agreed by the Council now would only be in place for 12 months.

(ii) Any recommendation to vary the Basic Allowance should be based on strong empirical data which will take some time to collect.

5.2 The Panel is keen for early engagement with the Council as it develops its proposals for Cabinet Governance – in fact we have tasked officers with starting to gather data on comparable authorities and structures. To that end, we urge the Administration to make the proposed structure known as soon as possible. However again we are mindful that this may need to be refined in the light of evidence gathered post implementation – i.e. any initial allowances scheme for the new Cabinet system will not be based on its operation in practice. We will also review the current 30% “voluntary discount” or “pro-bono publico” with a view to making recommendations as to whether this continues to be set at the appropriate level.

5.3 We therefore accept that there is a need for a fundamental review of all aspects of the allowances scheme to make sure it is fit for purpose. Whilst affordability of a scheme is not the primary concern of the Panel, we are mindful that the Council is currently consulting on significant budgetary reductions and therefore it is all the more important to make sure that any

recommendations on major changes to the scheme are robust and properly evidenced.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Basic Allowance remains at £9,401 for the financial year 2018/19, subject to the same percentage increase, if any, that is awarded to local authority employees for that year;
2. That a fundamental review be undertaken by the Panel in 2018, with any resulting changes to be implemented in 2019

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES (SRAs)

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In considering SRAs, the Panel must have regard to Government Guidance, in particular the following key issues:-
- (i) there must be significant additional responsibilities if an SRA is to be paid;
 - (ii) there is no limit on the number of SRAs and a member can receive more than one SRA, although in Norfolk the practice is that a member can hold more than one SRA post but is only paid for one (the highest);
 - (iii) if the majority of members receive an SRA the local electorate may question whether this is justified;
 - (iv) not all responsibilities given to particular members may involve significant additional responsibility.
- 1.2 In its previous review, the Panel followed the Guidance by first agreeing the SRA for the Leader and then grading as a percentage of the Leader figure, those posts it considered merited the payment of SRAs.

2.0 PRESENT POSITION

- 2.1 The Panel invited the Group Leaders to identify if there were any particular SRA issues that had arisen and which they wanted the Panel to consider as a matter of urgency.
- 3.2a The Panel received and has considered 3 representations from Group Leaders as follows:
- (i) It was suggested that there needs to be recognition that different Service Committee chairmen required a different SRA because of the significance of their responsibilities. It was suggested that the Chairmen of Children's Services and Adult Social Care Committees should receive higher remuneration than other Service Committee Chairmen. It was also suggested that these two Chairmen should be followed by the Chairmen of Business and Property Committee and the Digital Innovation and Efficiency Committee. Finally, the Chairmen of the Communities Committee and the Environment, Development and Transport should have the lowest SRAs of the Committee Chairmen.
 - (ii) It was suggested that the spokespersons and group leaders of the opposition groups have an increased focus with the reduction of the number of political groups on the Council. Overall, the changes the administration has made have added to the consequences of the election outcome. The

demands have increased more on opposition groups and reduced on the administration.

(iii) It was suggested that the fact that the Liberal Democrat Group has only one Member on 4 of the Service Committees placed a significant additional responsibility on that Councillor and with the reduction in the number of political groups represented on the Council there was still a significant additional responsibility for all Liberal Democrat Service Committee Spokespersons which was not reflected in any SRA.

3.2b Other issue

Subsequent to our meetings we were advised that some changes were necessary to Member SRA positions with regard to Children's Services due to the illness of the current Chairman. Given the urgency and importance of having continuity and robust Member leadership to progress the Children's Services improvement journey, we were advised that the Chairman would retain her position during her current illness and continue to receive her Special Responsibility Allowance pending her return. The current Vice Chairman would become Acting Chairman and receive the equivalent allowance of the Chairman to recognise the significant additional responsibilities. An Acting Vice Chairman was to be appointed who would receive the equivalent of the Vice Chairman's allowance for the period required.

We supported the steps that the Council had taken given its urgency and importance.

3.3 VIEWS OF THE PANL ON REPRESENTATION RECCEIVED

(i) The Panel accepted the proposition that the Chairmen of the Children's Services Committee (CSC) and the Adult Social Care Committee (ASC) were particularly high profile roles which carry the responsibilities that reflect the challenges around the local and national agendas in these areas. The Panel agreed that it was appropriate to reflect this in the SRA for these 2 posts. The Panel however felt that they did not have any evidence to make recommendations on the banding of the other Chairmen as suggested above in the representation of the Group Leader. Service Committee Chairmen's SRAs are currently set at 50% of the Leader (£13,747). In considering the appropriate level for the Chairmen of CSC and ASC, the Panel was mindful not to erode the differential with the Deputy Leader's SRA (£17,872 - 65% of the Leader's SRA). It was therefore agreed to recommend that the SRA for the Chairmen of CSC and ASC be set at 57.5% of the Leader's SRA (£15,809).

(ii) Currently the scheme only allows a Service Committee Group Spokesperson's SRA to be paid to the largest Group on a Service Committee not holding the Chairmanship (£2,062, 7.5% of the Leader's SRA). On all of

the Service Committees this is the Labour Group, which holds 17 seats on the Council. We accept that there continues to be a significant additional responsibility for these posts, but we don't have sufficient evidence to come to a view as whether they should be remunerated at a higher level or what that level should be. We will review this as part of our ongoing work based on the emerging new structures.

(iii) The Liberal Democrat Group has 11 members and under the "Widdecombe" political balance rules is entitled to representation on all Service Committees. Currently the scheme only allows an SRA to be paid to the largest Group on the Committee not holding the Chairmanship. On all of the Service Committee this is the Labour Group, so no Liberal Democrat Members receive an SRA as a Group Spokesperson on a Service Committee. Given the reduction of Political Groups on the Council to 3 (in recent history there have been 6), we consider that there is a significant additional responsibility for Liberal Democrat spokespersons on Committees. However, we recognise that the additional responsibility of a Spokesperson from the largest opposition Group (Labour) is likely to be more significant. We therefore propose to recommend an SRA payable to spokespersons on Service Committees from the second largest group not holding the Chairmanship, of 5% of the Leader's Allowance (£1375)

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS ON SRAS

1. To note that a full review of SRAs will be undertaken pending clarification of the Council's intentions with regard to its future system of governance.
2. Amendments to the current SRAs as follows:-
 - Chairmen of Children's Services Committee and Adult Social Care Committee to receive 57.5% of the Leader's SRA (£15,809)
 - Group Spokespersons from the second largest Group not holding the Chair on Service Committees and Policy and Resources Committee to receive 5% of the Leader's Allowance (£1,375)

DEPENDENT CARERS' ALLOWANCE

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 One of the Panel's responsibilities is to consider whether a Carers' Allowance should be paid and if so, at what rate.
- 1.2 The Carers' Allowance is payable towards the cost of care of dependent relatives (be they children, elderly people or people with disabilities). It is designed to enable a Councillor to carry out their County Council work. A carer will be any responsible adult who does not normally live with the Councillor as part of that Councillor's family.
- 1.3 It has previously been agreed that such an allowance should be paid and as recommended by the Panel in 2013, it is maintained at a rate of 10% above the national living wage. It is currently £8.25 per hour, subject to a limit of £3,168 for any individual Councillor in a single year.
- 1.4 Take-up of the allowance has been extremely low in Norfolk County Council and during the financial year 2016/17, no claims were made by members.

2.0 COMPARISON

- 2.1 Accurate direct comparisons with other Councils are complicated by the fact that some have differing rates depending upon whether the dependent relative is a child or an adult. Within Norfolk, other hourly rates are:-

Norwich City	-	£10 per hour per child
North Norfolk	-	£10 per hour
South Norfolk	-	£7.50 (National living wage)
Breckland	-	£8.45 per hour
Broadland	-	National minimum wage plus £3.00

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Panel considered that the Norfolk County Council rate does appear to have fallen substantially behind that in some of the other local councils. Given the take-up, the financial implications of making any increase are not substantial we feel it is appropriate to bring the rate more in line with the average payable locally.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That the rate be set at National Living Wage (£7.50) plus 20% (currently £9.00)

CO-OPTEEES ALLOWANCE

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Legislation enables local authorities to pay an annual co-optees allowance to people who are not members of the authority but who are members of a committee of the authority. In Norfolk County Council, the following posts are potentially eligible for payment:-

- Person representing the Roman Catholic Diocese
- Person representing the Church of England Diocesan Board of Education
- Local Government Association nominees on the Pensions Committee (2)
- Co-Optees on the Police and Crime Panel (2)

1.2 The County Council has previously concluded that none of the above posts will attract an allowance payment

2.0 Church Representatives

2.1 The Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church Diocesan Boards have a right to membership of the local authority committee responsible for education. This is in recognition of the important contribution which those they represent make to education at a local level. In Norfolk, each Diocesan Board has one representative and they each serve on the Children's Services Committee. They are entitled to speak on all matters discussed by the committees but only to vote on matters which relate to education functions. The Panel considers that as employees of the Diocesan Boards, the Church representatives are already remunerated for the time they spend as Members of the Children's Services Committee

3.0 Co-opted Members on the Police and Crime Panel

3.1 Norfolk Police and Crime Panel is a joint committee of the county and district councils in Norfolk. Its role to hold to account the Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The Panel scrutinises the actions and decisions of the PCC and supports and challenges the PCC in the exercise of his functions.

3.2 The Panel comprises 3 county and 7 district councillors, but is required by legislation to co-opt 2 independent persons (non-councillors). The independent persons are identified through an open recruitment process. They are co-opted for respective terms 4 years. The appointments were made on the basis of those with the skills, experience and qualities considered best to secure the effective functioning of the Panel

3.3 The Panel's specific roles include:

- Scrutinise and report on the Commissioner's proposed annual precept;
- Conduct confirmatory hearings to review the proposed appointment by the commissioner of a new Chief Constable, Deputy PCC, Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer;
- Review the Commissioner's draft Police and Crime Plan;
- Review the Commissioner's Annual Report;
- Consider and respond to a proposal by the PCC to call upon the Chief Constable to retire or resign.

3.4 The Panel meets at least 4 times per year but usually more than this. The independent members on the Police and Crime Panel are volunteers who put themselves forward for the role. The members are able to have their travel costs reimbursed but there is currently no remuneration to reflect the time commitment they make. The Panel recommended at its last review that an allowance of £1000 should be paid to these posts, however the Council did not accept that recommendation. Since then the role of the independent member has been enhanced through a greater involvement in complaints about the conduct of the PCC. The Panel specifically invited the Group Leaders views on the Independent Members of the PCP however, none were received.

We asked your officers to seek the views of the 2 independent members and their views are as follows:

- Most if not all independent Members that have met have received some form of allowance. The largest by far was around £6K per year but the majority gave their independent members an allowance of £1K per year. I applied for this position and was accepted on the basis that I was a volunteer. I am quite happy for that to remain the case unless the County wish to align themselves to others.
- I volunteered for the role on the PCP and rather think that altering my approach would be out of alignment with my civic direction. I am however, aware, that there is a divergence between many of the PCP's, some paying as much as £6K whilst others pay around £1K, some pay nothing at all. In addition Norfolk County Council are having to make considerable savings over the next few years and the concept of paying for something that is at this moment provided for free (nearly) is counterintuitive. I came on board as a volunteer and am happy to continue to be one. If, however, a small retainer or allowance were paid would not decline it.

4.0 Local Government Association Representatives on the Pensions Committee

4.1 The Pensions Committee exercises the County Council's functions relating to local government pensions. Although administered by the County Council, access to the Norfolk County Superannuation Fund is available to district council staff in Norfolk. Consequently, the Committee includes 2 additional voting members who are nominated by the Local Government Association to represent the interests of the district councils and other authorities which are

admitted to the Norfolk County Fund. The persons nominated are district councillors.

The Pensions Committee meets about 4 times per year. The Panel considers that as the County Council; representatives on the Pensions Committee do not receive any additional remuneration for this role there is no justification to be paid to the District Council representatives.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 We consider that there remains a strong case to recognise the important contribution of the Independent Members of the Police and Crime Panel. Since our last report where we recommended a co-opted allowance, the value of these posts has been enhanced through an increased role in a number of functions of the Panel and we therefore see no reason to change our view that an allowance should be paid. Given the divergence of the amounts paid by others, we agree that an allowance towards the lower end would be appropriate.

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 That a co-opted member's allowance of £1000 is paid to independent members of the Norfolk Police and Crime Panel.

TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 An allowances scheme may provide for the payment to members of an allowance in respect of travelling and subsistence undertaken in connection with or relating to such duties as are specified in the scheme.
- 1.2 The Panel has previously recommended that the travel and subsistence arrangements for members be the same as those in place for officers of the Council. This was subsequently agreed by the Council and is reflected in the current scheme and the rates are adjusted accordingly, as and when the officer rates change.
- 1.3 The Scheme also sets out a list of the duties that are approved for the purpose of travel, subsistence and carers' allowances. For a member to claim any of these allowances, the duty to which the claim relates must fall within the approved list. This part of the scheme also covers the claiming of the cost of home broadband

2. REPRESENTATION RECEIVED

- 2.1 We received a representation from a Group leader on 1 point:

(i) At present there is the ability to make a claim for home internet connection. It is difficult to unpick from some combined packages that media providers market to make a fair claim.

This area of expenditure should be reimbursed in some way. Making a claim would be cumbersome, time consuming and expensive for the council. I invite the panel to consider increasing the basic allowance by a fixed sum to recognise this outgoing.

2.2 View of the Panel on Representations Received

(i) A Member may claim 50% of their broadband connection, subject to a maximum of £10. We understand the point made that some services are purchased in bundles, but we are not aware of any practical difficulties this has caused and we conclude that any payments made should be on the basis of cost and require a claim (which is done through the monthly on line claim form). We do however appreciate the emphasis the Council has placed on Members working in a "paper-less" way, and that there may be additional costs associated with this shift. We therefore recommend increasing the maximum claimable each month to £13.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That no changes be made to the present arrangements for travel and subsistence allowance, with the exception that a Councillor may claim 50% of their home broadband connection, subject to a maximum of **£13** per month.

OTHER MATTTTERS

1.0 REPRESENTATON RECEIVED

1.1 We received a representation from a Group Leader on a further point:

(i) From this May the council has also stopped providing printers and ink for councillors, instead expecting us to buy our own. A number of councillors find it difficult to manage complex financial reports and columns of data on our iPads and so print off pages off agendas.

Both these areas of expenditure should be reimbursed in some way. Making a claim would be cumbersome, time consuming and expensive for the council. I invite the panel to consider increasing the basic allowance by a fixed sum to recognise these outgoings.

1.2 View of the Panel on Representations Received

(i) Again, we note the emphasis on Members working in a “paper-less” manner. In the previous Council, Members were provided with printers and also consumables (printer cartridges and paper). Members took a decision as part of the IT refresh, that the “offer” to the new Council elected in 2017 would not include printers and consumables. Whilst we accept that some Members may need to print off some documentation, we consider that any costs should reasonably be funded from the basic allowance. We do not think it would be appropriate for us to make a recommendation to allow Members to claim for these consumables, as it would directly contradict the direction of travel that Members have agreed.

2.0 RECCOMENDATION

That no change to the current scheme is made.