

Wiltshire Council

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel of Wiltshire Council

18 October 2022

**Independent Remuneration Panel Recommendation - Audit & Governance
Committee**

Executive Summary

This report sets out the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in relation to the remuneration of any co-opted member of the Audit & Governance Committee appointed by the Council.

Full Council delegated appointment of up to 2 co-opted members to the Audit & Governance committee at its meeting on 17 May 2022.

Recommendation of the IRP

That the remuneration for the independent co-opted member of the Audit & Governance Committee should be £2,000 per annum.

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Introduction

1. Wiltshire Council's Independent Remuneration Panel is convened under The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The Regulations require all local authorities to set up and maintain an advisory Independent [Members'] Remuneration Panel to review and provide advice on Members' allowances. All councils are required to convene their Remuneration Panel and seek its recommendation before making any changes or amendments to their allowances scheme. The council must '*pay regard*' to the Panel's recommendations before setting a new or amended Members' Allowances Scheme.

Background

2. Wiltshire Council's Independent Remuneration Panel was appointed by the Council following a selection process involving representatives from all political groups and overseen by the Monitoring Officers. The Panel consists of the following members:

John Quinton (Chairman)

John is now retired following a career in local government, including working as the Head of Democratic Services for Wiltshire Council 2003-2013. Prior to working for Wiltshire Council, John performed a similar role at Surrey County Council. Since retirement, he has served on, and chaired, Independent Remuneration Panels for former district councils within Dorset and Bournemouth, both successor and unitary councils, and for the Dorset and Wiltshire Combined Fire Authority.

Keith Broughton

Keith Broughton spent most of his working life in human resources, specialising in remuneration and benefits. He worked for a number of major international companies and consultancies. Now retired, he lives in North Dorset and has served on Independent Remuneration Panels for Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole councils.

Bernadette Fitzmaurice

Recently retired from a career in contract management, compliance, and commissioning, including a period with Wiltshire Council and Aster Group. Bernadette's previous experience also includes time as an Area Manager within the voluntary sector, for Wiltshire, Hampshire and Dorset's Supported Employment Service delivering European Social Fund Projects and Services.

3. The Independent Remuneration Panel ('the Panel') undertook a thorough review of the Members' Allowances Scheme in 2021 which was debated by the full Council 20 July 2021.
4. It is best practice that a Panel be appointed for 4 years, and after a thorough review of the Members' Allowance Scheme at the start of each term (see above), produce annual reports considering any in-year changes required. Changes may be prompted by amendments to roles, responsibilities, governance arrangements or government guidance that would warrant a review of a specific area of the scheme.
5. As part of its remit to produce an annual review, the Panel contacted the Group Leaders to ask whether there were any remunerations issues that they would wish the Panel to consider at this point. No issues were brought to the Panel's attention. As a consequence issues that were identified as being outstanding by the Panel in its report of July 2021, will therefore need to be considered during the next in-depth review (2025).
6. On 1 March 2022, following a resolution at the Audit & Governance Committee, the Panel was asked to consider the remuneration of a proposed Independent Co-opted Member of that committee. This report sets out the Panel's conclusions and recommendations.
7. The Panel received officer support from Kieran Elliott, Democracy Manager (Democratic Service), Simon Bennett, Senior Scrutiny Officer
8. All the recommendations of the Panel were agreed unanimously.

Principles

9. The Panel conducted the review in accordance with the principles of its 2021 review. As they were considering remuneration for an independent co-opted member of a committee they focused upon providing reasonable recompense for the time commitment and duties involved, after allowing for an element of public service.
10. The Panel is not able to consider the financial implications of their recommendations upon the local authority. The financial implications of this report are a matter for Full Council and are provided in the covering report.

Process and Methodology

11. In undertaking the review, the Panel met on four occasions between 8 April and 6 May 2022. As with the report of July 2021 the Panel based its deliberations on an assessment of the responsibility, accountability, time, and effort required for the role of independent co-opted member.
12. The Panel considered a range of evidence, including:

Benchmarking and supporting information

13. The Panel referred to written background information when considering formulating its recommendations. In particular the current Members' Allowances scheme set out

in the council's constitution (Part 13). Also referred to was the report to the Audit & Governance Committee (1 March 2022) and its appendices. Also discussed was benchmarking information setting out whether comparable local authorities had an independent member on their Audit (& Governance) Committee, whether they received any remuneration and at what level. See the attached appendices.

14. The Panel were also aware of changes proposed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities responding to a technical consultation on the [local audit framework](#). The government has set out the principle that local authorities must have an audit committee, and that the committee should have at least one independent member.

Verbal evidence from councillors and officers

15. The Panel held three individual online meetings with the Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee, the Corporate Director, Resources & Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) and the Director, Legal & Governance.
16. The evidence they provided is referenced, where appropriate, throughout this report.
17. Discussions with the interviewees covered the background to the creation of the role of independent member and the role and remit of the Audit & Governance Committee. The knowledge and skills identified as requirements for the independent member were also discussed as well as the challenges of recruiting a suitable candidate.
18. The Panel considered the nature of the role. Evidence received in the interviews indicated that it would provide an independent perspective, act as a 'critical friend' and be able to hold the council to account when necessary.

Conclusions

19. In its 2021 report the Panel recognised the significant extra responsibilities in terms of the council's financial management and regulatory framework undertaken by the Committee and its Chairman. This was re-iterated during the interviews conducted by the Panel.
20. The Panel were convinced that this is a significant role and that as the council has not previously had a similar position, the appointee will have a considerable impact upon the shaping, influence, and direction of the Committee.
21. Given the recent suggested changes to local government audit from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities this role will assume greater significance in the future, as it will across all local authorities.
22. The Panel however did also consider that as a non-voting member of the Committee may not be considered as accountable as other members.

23. The Panel concluded that the independent person should receive remuneration. Ideally the independent member should be someone with considerable relevant experience, and as such it was considered that remuneration be at the higher end of the scale given to other independent members of committees.

Recommendation

24. The Independent Remuneration Panel recommends that:
25. The remuneration for any independent co-opted member of the Audit & Governance Committee should be £2,000 per annum.

John Quinton, Keith Broughton, Bernadette Fitzmaurice

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10 October 2022

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Audit & Governance Committee, Appointment of Independent Co-opted Members to the Audit and Governance Committee (1 March 2022)

1a – Report to consider the inclusion of independent co-opted members (2019)

1b – Independent members of Audit Committees at other local authorities

1c – Terms of reference of Audit & Governance Committee

1d – Draft job description and role profile

Appendix 2 - Independent members of Audit Committees at other local authorities (updated 2022)

Appendix 3 – Members' Allowance Scheme (Wiltshire Council Constitution Part 13)

Background Papers

None