

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Democratic Services Committee

11th November 2024

Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services – Mr Craig Griffiths

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected:

All wards

Draft Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

Purpose of the Report:

To advise Members of the Democratic Services Committee of proposals set out by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales which, if implemented, would impact on Member remuneration in the civic year 2025/2026 and to seek the views of the Committee so as to inform the Council's formal response to the draft proposals.

Background:

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales exercises powers set out in various legislation and can also make recommendations. It has the power to set the level of remuneration payable to elected members and co-opted members of local authorities.

Before making its final determinations for the following civic year, the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales publishes a draft report each year and invites comments on its draft proposals. Proposals for 2025/26 are set out in the attached draft report which is before the Committee for consideration today.

The proposed changes that would affect the existing arrangements in this Council are summarised in the table below:

Element of Remunerations	Current 2024/25	Proposed by IRPW for 2025/2026
Basic Salary	£18,666	£19,771
Leader	£62,998	£66,727
Deputy Leader	£44,099	£46,709
Executive Members	£37,799	£40,036
Chairs of Committee	£27,999	£29,657
Leader of largest opposition Group	£27,999	£29,657
Leader of other Political Group	£22,406	£23,726
Civic Head	£27,999	£29,657
Deputy Civic Head	£22,406	£23,726

The limits on the number of senior salaries available to the Council remain unchanged as does the threshold for other opposition group leaders to qualify for the other political group leader salary.

There are no further changes proposed to the payments and benefits paid to elected members in relation to:

- Travel and Subsistence
- Care and Personal Assistance
- Sickness Absence
- Corporate Joint Committees
- Assistants to the Executive
- Additional salaries and job sharing arrangements

Co-Opted Members

The current determination states that co-opted members of the relevant bodies should be remunerated on a day or half day basis. The Panel has noted the changes to working practices such as short online briefings, and proposes to move to an hourly rate of remuneration and introduce a local flexibility for the relevant officer to decide if an hourly or half day/day rate be applicable.

The proposed rates are:

Role:	Hourly:	Half Day:	Full Day:
Chairs of standards, and audit committees	£33.50	£134	£268
Ordinary Members of Standards Committees who also chair Standards Committees for Community and Town Councils	£29.75	£119	£238
Ordinary Members of Standards Committees; Education Scrutiny Committee; Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee	£26.25	£105	£210
Community and Town Councillors sitting on Principal Council Standards Committees	£26.25	£105	£210

Consultation:

As with each draft Annual Report, the Panel are seeking feedback on the content of the report. A copy of the consultation questions is included as Appendix 2 but for ease of reference, the questions are listed below.

Uplift of remuneration using the Welsh Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

Q1: The Panel is fully aware of the current constraints on public funding and the impact its decisions will have on the budgets of Principal Authorities. The Panel is also mindful of our Aims and Objectives to provide

a fair and reasonable remuneration package to support elected members and to encourage diversity of representation.

We therefore propose using the ASHE for all Wales to increase their remuneration in line with the average earnings of their constituents.

Do you think that the Panel has struck the right balance between affordability and adequate remuneration for representatives? If not, do you have other suggestions?

- Yes
- No
- No opinion
- Blank

Any additional comments:

Impact of current determinations

Q2: Following evidence received from Heads of Democratic Services of Principal Councils, on local flexibility for payments to co opted members, serving on committees of Principal Councils, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities. This Panel consulted on this proposal and responses (from the consultation on the 2024 to 2025 draft annual report) supported the Panel's determinations and so no changes were made in the final Determinations, resulting in the Panel allowing relevant officers to decide if it would be appropriate to apply a day or half day rate or to use an hourly rate where it is sensible to aggregate a few short meetings.

The Panel would now like to know if this determination has been adopted by your relevant authority:

- Yes
- No
- No opinion
- Blank

Any additional comments:

Q3: Last year, in conjunction with One Voice Wales, the Panel held a seminar on the treatment of tax on members Community and Town Councils (CTC) allowances. This was followed up with guidance on how to apply the exemption to the working from home allowance (£156).

The Panel is interested to learn if the seminar and or guidance has increased the number of CTC members receiving the allowance.

Q4: All allowances paid to elected members of Community and Town Councils should be recorded on the Annual Statement of Payments for Community and Town Councils (noting Statements already submitted by Community and Town Councils will be accepted would be accepted). This includes NIL returns.

Earlier this year, a revised Statement template and advice note were issued to Community and Town Councils. The Panel are interested if the Template has again increased the number of councillors claiming allowances?

The Committee is therefore invited to consider, and comment on the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report and its Determinations for 2025/26, and to provide comments for inclusion in the response to the consultation. The consultation period ends on 29th November 2024.

Financial Impacts:

The proposals would be contained within the budget provision.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

There is no requirement for an Integrated Impact Assessment as this is a report in respect of governance arrangements only.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

There are no valley community impacts

Workforce Impacts:

There are no workforce impacts associated with this reports.

Legal Impacts:

The Panel are exercising powers set out in Part 8 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, as amended by the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 and the Local Government (Wales) Act 2015.

Risk Management Impacts:

Any proposed increase to Member remuneration has the potential to attract public criticism at a time of severe and enduring austerity. The Panel acknowledges this in making its proposals but points to the workloads and responsibilities being borne by elected Members as justification for the proposed changes.

Consultation:

The IRPW are consulting about their proposals and Members have the opportunity to feedback their views. All Members were sent a copy of the draft Report on the 28th October 2024. The Panel is required to allow a minimum of 8 weeks between issuing its draft and final Annual Report.

Recommendations:

- That the Committee considers and comments on the Determinations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in their draft Annual Report for 2024/25.
- That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to make a response on behalf of the Democratic Services Committee reflecting the decision and comments made at the meeting, to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To formulate a response to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' draft Annual Report within the consultation timetable.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Draft IRPW Annual Report
Appendix 2- Draft IRPW Consultation Questions

List of Background Papers:

None

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