

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

7th June 2021

Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services- Mr C. Griffiths

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All wards

Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales 2021/22

Purpose of the Report

1. To advise Members of the Democratic Services Committee of the content of the final Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales for the civic year 2021/2022. The link to the Annual Report is [Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales: annual report 2021 to 2022](#)

Background

2. The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) 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. It has also been given a general power to review councils' pay policy statements as far as they relate to heads of paid service, extended on a temporary basis to chief officers of principal authorities.

Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

3. Each year, and before making its final determinations for the next civic year, the IRPW publishes a draft report and invites comments on its draft proposals. The proposals proposed for the civic year 2021-22 were considered by this Committee in November 2020 and the following comments were forwarded to the IRPW:
4. The following response was provide:

“As now proposed ‘Contribution towards the costs of care and personal assistance’

We know that the Panel has worked hard over a number of years to encourage elected members to take up the carers’ allowance but to date the number of people claiming this allowance remains very low. We have also worked hard, through our Democratic Services Committee more broadly and have had similar experience.

We are not convinced that the two tier nature of the allowance as now proposed is going to make any material difference to the situation as the principal reason why members do not claim this allowance is one of public perception. We would also like to see a clearer rationale as to why two different rates of payment are being proposed.

Proposed Increase to Remuneration- the Council’s Head of Democratic Services Mrs Karen Jones has responded on this and the Democratic Services Committee have no objections to her representations.”

From the then Head of Democratic Services, Mrs Karen Jones:

“Proposed Increase to Remuneration

I am not supportive of the very small increase proposed to the basic salary and senior salaries of elected members. As the report highlights, the remuneration of elected members is now significantly distant from appropriate benchmarks and I would have expected the Panel to have started to address this for the civic year 2021/22 given that we have seen more significant increases

in the remuneration of other elected officials and of professional staff. Whilst it was appropriate for the Panel to take a different stance during years of austerity, it is now time for the Panel to begin to redress the position that years of restraint has created.

A growing number of our elected members are of working age where the basic salary is their sole income. Remuneration must be sufficient to enable those members to carry out their role. As we approach the 2022 local government elections, remuneration will also be an important consideration for those standing for office for the first time or standing for re-election. The 2021/22 civic year is an important year for the Panel to seek to redress remuneration levels in this respect.

In terms of those receiving senior salary, whilst accepting that arrangements may vary from council to council, our local position is that the responsibilities shouldered by those in these roles and the hours worked have increased sharply. In addition to the significant service and policy changes necessary to respond to austerity, members are increasingly involved in complex partnership arrangements at the local, regional and national level – a situation likely to intensify under the Local Government and Elections Act 2020.

In addition to wishing to see a more substantial increase for basic and senior salary roles in 2021/22 I would like to see a clear commitment to bring forward an updated model of remuneration for the elected members of principal councils in time for the 2022 local government elections. The Local Government and Elections Act 2020 clearly signals the end to speculation about local government re-organisation so it is timely to consider bringing forward a revised model that supports the way roles have and will continue to develop.”

5. The IRPW has now published its final proposals for the civic year 2021-22 and Members are asked to note that proposals are unchanged from those contained in the draft report.
6. A summary of the remuneration for members for the civic year 2021/22 is as follows:

Element of Remunerations	2020/21	2021/22
Basic Salary	£14,218	£14, 368
Leader	£49,450	£49, 974
Deputy Leader	£34,950	£35,320
Executive Members	£30,450	£30,773
Chairs of Committee	£22,918	£23,161
Leader of largest opposition Group	£22,918	£23,161
Leader of other political Group	£17,918	£18,108
Civic Head	£22,918	£23,161
Deputy Civic Head	£17,918	£18,108

7. As part of their report, the IRPW has re-emphasised the need for Democratic Services Committees to ensure that all elected members are given the support necessary for them to fulfil their duties effectively.

Financial Impact

8. The draft budget proposals for the Council for 2021/22 included an uplift to cover the additional costs created by the increase in the salaries for Members.

Integrated Impact Assessment

9. Although no integrated impact assessment is required for this report, the draft supplementary guidance would have a beneficial impact on those Members who have caring responsibilities and may assist in attracting people from diverse backgrounds to stand for election as councillors.

Workforce Impacts

10. There are no workforce impacts identified in relation to the proposed changes.

Risk Management

11. Any increase to Member remuneration has the potential to attract public criticism at a time of severe and enduring austerity. The IRPW acknowledge this in making its proposals but points to the workloads and responsibilities being borne by elected Members as justification for the proposed changes. Furthermore, the IRPW provides details of how councillor remuneration is continuing to diverge from the benchmark rate.

Legal Powers

12. The IRPW 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.

Consultation

13. All Members were sent a copy of the draft Report. The Committee and the Head of Democratic Services at the time Mrs Karen Jones wrote, on behalf of the Chair and Committee to the IRPW, summarising Members' views on the draft proposals as outlined above.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that having due regard to the fact that there is no integrated impact assessment that members of the Democratic Services Committee note the contents of the final Annual Report issued by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

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