

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Democratic Services Committee

27th November 2023

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 2024/2025 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 2024/25 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 2023/24	Proposed by IRPW for 2024/2025
Basic Salary	£17,600	£18,666
Leader	£59,400	£62,998
Deputy Leader	£41, 580	£44,099
Executive Members	£35,640	£37,799
Chairs of Committee	£26,400	£27,999
Leader of largest opposition Group	£26,400	£27,999
Leader of other Political Group	£21,340	£22,406
Civic Head	£26,400	£27,999
Deputy Civic Head	£21,340	£22,406

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.

Q1 – 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?

Q2 – Do you agree with the Panels proposal in relation to co-opted

members of committees? If not, do you have any suggested alternatives?

Q3 – Do you have any examples of good practice or other ideas of ways in which we might use our powers to encourage more sustainable travel among members?

Q4 – This question is seeking individual Member responses.

Q5 – This question relates specifically to Community and Town Councils so does not apply.

Q6 – Do you agree that figures for travel and subsistence expenses of members of principal councils should be published as a global total rather than individually?

Question 4 of the consultation is seeking to establish whether individual Members are aware of the payments they are entitled to. It would not therefore be appropriate for this Committee to provide an answer on behalf of all elected Members and co-opted members of committees. It is proposed that the Democratic Services Manager issues this question to all elected Members and the co-opted members. This could take the form of an anonymous survey, or they could be asked to provide an individual response direct to the IRPW.

The Committee is therefore invited to consider, and comment on the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report and its Determinations for 2024, and to provide comments for inclusion in the response to the consultation. The consultation period ends on 8 December 2023.

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 increased to Member remuneration has the potential to attract public criticism at a time of severe and enduring austerity. The Panel acknowledge this in making its proposals but point 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 13th November 2023. 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.

- That the Head of Democratic Services issue Question 4 of the consultation document to all elected Members and co-opted members for them to respond to individually.

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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