

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR THE NEW UNITARY COUNCIL, SOMERSET COUNCIL

ROLE OF THE PANEL

The Panel advises the Council on its Scheme of Members' Allowances. Statute sets out the requirements of members' allowances schemes and the role of remuneration panels. Each Council must have a panel or access to a panel and must consider the recommendations of the panel before making decisions in respect of allowances to be paid to its councillors for undertaking official duties.

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL MEMBERS

- 1. Panel member appointments** initially run for 3 years from the date of appointment with the option of then being reappointed for a further 3-year term. No Panel member is to serve more than a 6-year term.
- 2.** The Council appoints 5 Panel members. The Panel is supported by officers of the council. The Panel meets collectively to consider and make recommendations to the Council on its members' allowances scheme.
- 3. Legal restrictions on Independent Remuneration Panel appointments**

An independent remuneration panel shall consist of at least three members, none of whom—

- (a) can also be a member of an authority in respect of which it makes recommendations or be a member of a committee or sub-committee of such an authority; or
- (b) are disqualified from being or becoming a member of an authority.

4. Panel Member role

This is a voluntary role as a voting member of the Panel which has the following functions, to make recommendations—

- (a) on the responsibilities or duties for which the following should be available—
 - (i) special responsibility allowance;
 - (ii) travelling and subsistence allowance; and co-optees' allowance;

(b) as to the amount of such allowances and as to the amount of the basic allowance;

(c) as to whether dependants' carers' allowance should be payable to members of an authority, and as to the amount of such an allowance;

(d) as to whether, where a scheme is amended so as to affect an allowance payable for the year in which the amendment is made, payment of allowances may be backdated;

(e) as to whether adjustments to the level of allowances may be determined according to an index and if so which index and how long that index should apply, subject to a maximum of four years, before its application is reviewed.

5. Panel Member commitment

On average Panel members could expect to be invited to attend 4-6 Panel meetings per annum. These are usually held during business hours and every effort is made to agree dates which are suitable for the Panel members. Flexible meeting arrangements are possible including the use of Microsoft Teams for a hybrid meeting to allow participation if Panel members are unable to physically attend a meeting. Ad hoc attendance may also be required for training purposes.

6. Panel Member Expenses

As a voluntary role there is no salary associated with the role, but Panel members appointed by the Council may claim travel and subsistence (where the duty qualifies) for meetings of the Panel.

7. Recruitment Process

Anyone wishing to apply to join the Panel as a Council appointment is asked to submit a CV and a short personal statement in support of their application. Short-listed candidates will be invited to attend an informal interview and the appointment will be made on merit.

Andrew Melhuish, Service Manager – Democratic Services
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