

## **Title of report: Councillors Allowance Scheme – Extra Recommendation**

**Meeting: Council**

**Meeting date: Friday 28 May 2021**

**Report by: The Monitoring Officer;**

**Independent Persons (IPs) – consideration of whether they should qualify for an allowance**

The Panel have been asked, by the audit and governance committee, to consider whether the independent persons for standards should be paid an allowance. The solicitor to council confirmed that the Localism Act 2011 did permit an allowance to be paid without affecting an IP's independence.

By way of background, IPs assist the Council in promoting high standards of conduct by elected and co-opted members of Herefordshire Council and town and parish councillors. In particular to uphold the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council and the seven principles of public office, namely selflessness, honesty, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness and leadership. IPs are consulted by the Council through the Monitoring Officer before it makes a decision on an investigated allegation and to be available to attend meetings of the Standards Panel, if necessary. The full breadth of the role of an IP can be reviewed [here](#).

In reviewing the question placed with the Panel, the following was noted.

- There were currently seven IPs, workloads are evenly spread between them
- There are varying degrees of complexity within case work, which in turn can generate reasonably significant amounts of preparation ahead of panel meetings
- That in the recent past, the council has found it difficult to recruit IPs. However, the most recent recruitment exercise had brought forward 8 IPs
- That the IPs themselves, having informally discussed the option to be paid an allowance had given clear indications that they would be minded to not claim that allowance.

In balancing the evidence presented, the Panel noted that they could set an allowance rate, linked to the rates received by member's remuneration. The role played by IPs is important to upholding, and where necessary challenging, the standards expected of elected and co-opted members.

However, the Panel were not persuaded that the motivations of IPs to take on such a role was influenced by remuneration; more a commitment to ensuring the highest possible standards in public office are central to the ways of working within the local authority and parish tiers of local government. At the current time, the Panel do not feel it is appropriate to recommend an allowance is paid to the IPs.

**Recommendation:**

**That, at the current time, no changes are made to the remuneration of the Independent Persons**

The Panel wishes to place on record the hugely valued work of the IPs, they lead by example as advocates and ambassadors for the Council in promoting ethical behaviour.

**Background papers** – none identified