

**The Report of the Herefordshire
Independent Remuneration Panel**

17 May 2022

Introduction

1. The following is a synopsis of the proceedings and recommendations made by the independent remuneration Panel (the Panel) appointed by Herefordshire Council to review the principal areas relating to the members' allowance scheme. This fulfils a recommended commitment, from the 2021 report of the Panel that it be reconvened after new constitutional arrangements have been confirmed and to explore whether there are any further changes required. The detailed scope of what the Panel was asked to consider is set out in paragraph 11 below.
2. The Panel has been set up and convened under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI1021) and subsequent amendments to the regulations (SI2003/1022 and SI 2003/1692 (the Regulations)).
3. The Regulations require all local authorities to set up and maintain an independent remuneration Panel to review and provide advice about the allowances to be paid to Members. All councils are required to convene their remuneration Panel and have due regard to their recommendations before setting a new or amended Members' Allowances Scheme (the Scheme).

The Panel - operational Context:

4. The Panel emphasises that its role is to undertake an independent review of Herefordshire Council's Scheme of Allowances within the scope set out in paragraph 11 below.
5. The Panel were provided with the contextual setting that had prompted this review. Notably, that the council has been reviewing its governance arrangements focussed on maximising member engagement and participation in decision-making; ensuring decision-making is informed, transparent and efficient and to enable members to perform effectively in clearly defined functions and roles. Within this context, new constitutional provisions will come in to force on 20 May 2022.
6. The Panel recognised the important role Herefordshire Councillors provide representing their electorate and in their role in taking informed local decisions. Many of those decisions carrying with them statutory and regulatory responsibilities.

The Independent Remuneration Panel

7. Herefordshire Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (the Panel) consists of the following Members:
 - **Richard Garnett** – Chairperson
 - **Rowena Green** – Panel Member
 - **Wendy Bevan** – Panel Member
8. The Panel were supported by the democratic services manager, a senior solicitor to the council, a democratic services officer and a legal assistant from the council's legal and democratic services team. Their roles were to record proceedings, take the organisational lead in providing the evidence base and technical support and advice to Panel members where requested/required. In addition, officers provided opportunities for the Panel to meet

with the political group leaders to consider their views in relation to the changing roles and responsibilities of councillors following amendments to the council's constitution.

9. The Panel would like to record their thanks to all those who provided evidence during the review. Their insights and evidence has been considered with care and attention in the deliberations of the Panel.

Panel proceedings

Date	Items considered
W/C 28 March	Panel meeting – agreeing panel Chair and Training provided for panel members
7 – 8 April	Panel Meeting – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of reference proposed and agreed; • Lines of enquiry and evidence gathering proposed • Presenting Benchmarking Data • Key areas defined for members' survey
25 April	Panel meeting – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initial members' survey result presented • setting dates to meet with group leaders and topics to be covered
3- 5 May	Panel Meeting- group leaders
6 – 12 May	Supporting Officers: Report drafting,
12 May	Panel Meeting: agreeing and sign off of report
17 May	Supporting Officers: despatch for annual Council

What the Panel was asked to look at.

10. In March 2022, full Council agreed to approve the amendments to the council's constitution recommended by audit and governance committee which drew extensively on the work of the Re-thinking Governance Working Group. Among the principal recommendations made was a reorganisation of scrutiny committee functions into 5 committees. Alongside this recommendation was the proposal for the Panel to meet and make recommendations in light of these, and other changes, and to ensure all constitutional changes are given consideration by the Panel.
11. The specific items that the Panel were asked to consider are the following issues:
- Whether a sliding scale Basic Allowance is introduced where differing rates of the basic allowance are linked with mandatory training of councillors and increased membership of committees.
 - Review of Scrutiny Chairpersons' Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA), specifically to consider whether the chairpersons of the two additional scrutiny committees receive an SRA commensurate with existing remuneration rates;
 - Consideration of introducing a new SRA for the Deputy Leader position, and
 - Whether Task and Finish Group chairpersons be entitled to a one off SRA.

The Independent Panel: remit

12. The Panel were required to conduct their work in time for the council meeting scheduled for 20 May 2022.

13. It is the Panel's remit to make recommendations in relation to the specific items they have been asked to consider
14. It is not within the Panel's remit to take into consideration the budget implications of its recommendations.
15. It is not a Panel remit to rule that the council adopt its recommendations. It is for council to consider, debate and agree on which recommendations from the Panel it chooses to agree, partially agree or reject.

Underpinning Principles of the Review

16. The Panel confirmed that their deliberations should also continue to be underpinned by the following principles set out by the [Dame Jane Roberts Councillors Commission](#), Members Remuneration, Models, Issues, Incentives and Barriers, 2007:

- P1:** The basic allowance should encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds and with a wide range of skills to serve as local councillors
- P2:** Those who participate in, and contribute to, the democratic process should not suffer unreasonable financial disadvantage
- P3:** Councillors should be compensated for their work and the compensation should have regard to the full range of commitment and complexity of their roles
- P4:** The system should be transparent, simple to operate and understand
- P5:** The system should not encourage the proliferation of meetings or provoke councillors into spending more time on council business than is necessary.
- P6:** The level of remuneration should relate to a commonly accepted benchmark

The evidence base presented to the Panel.

An all members' survey:

17. An online questionnaire was sent to all members on behalf of the Panel. It gathered information on the views and experiences of members in relation to their time commitment given to the role of being a councillor and the levels of remuneration members receive. It also sought members' views and opinions on the proposals set out in paragraph 11 above.
18. 29 out of 53 councillors responded, a return rate of just under 55%. A summary of the survey questions is attached at Appendix A.
19. The Panel also considered statistical benchmarking data from a range of other local authority settings. This cohort of local authorities had been selected on the basis that they are statistically similar to Herefordshire. The data included comparisons of Herefordshire Council's¹ data in the following areas:
 - Basic and special responsibility allowance (actuals)
 - Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) calculations (as a multiple of the basic allowance)
 - Allowance cost to the public purse – per local resident
 - Miscellaneous - ICT provision; parish councils per county and dependency allowances provided
 - Comparisons of the frequency of meetings from data from May 2015 to December 2016 with data from May 2019 to September 2020 and data September 2020 to May 2021.
20. The benchmarking data – which is publicly available via each of the respective council's website – is set out in Appendix B.
21. In considering the benchmarking information the Panel acknowledged that each local authority had unique characteristics and measuring similarities was subjective and not always directly comparable. However, the Panel did take into account Herefordshire's relative position within the benchmarking data.

Qualitative data.

22. At the outset of the review the Panel agreed that they wished to conduct meetings with the political group leaders, these meetings were conducted virtually for the convenience of the Panel and Group Leaders. All group leaders were invited to meet the Panel during the week commencing 3 May 2022.
23. In addition, a number of members volunteered their comments, questions and views via email correspondence in conjunction with the member's survey. The principal points raised by those members were shared with the Panel. It was explained that this additional information may be taken in to account as part of their considerations, where it related to the items under consideration, as set out in 11 above.

Other data requested

24. The Panel – in connection to considerations to the sliding scale of the basic allowance – requested a breakdown of the numbers of members who sit just on the full Council

¹

To note: LA working practices vary considerably, comparisons have therefore been made on a 'closest match' principle

committee and those who also are members of additional committees. This with a view to understanding how many members may be impacted by a proposal to link the lower rate of basic allowance to sitting on just one committee.

Triangulation.

25. The Panel triangulated their evidence where it was helpful, and in some instances, essential to do so. For example, comparing qualitative evidence from councillors' survey responses with benchmarking data to propose possible SRA rates for Herefordshire Councillors to consider.

Panel Discussion and Recommendations

Considerations of a sliding scale linked to the basic allowance with membership of committees.

26. The Panel were asked to consider whether the basic allowance should reflect the level of engagement members have with council committees. In essence, the full rate of basic allowance being offered to members who sit on two or more committees set at £8,074.00. The lower basic rate of allowance applying to members who sit on Full Council alone.
27. The principal sources of evidence reviewed by the Panel to inform the Panel's deliberations were as follows:
- **The balance of member opinion**
 - **Current profile of committee membership:**
 - **Time taken to carry out the role**
 - **Feedback from Group Leaders**
 - **What the regulations say** – in regard to Basic Allowance schemes, and
 - **Do other Local Authorities apply similar schemes?**

The Balance of member opinion

28. 100% of the 29 responders to the member's survey supported the notion of a sliding scale being attached to committee membership.
29. In analysing the comments from the 100% of councillors who were supportive of this proposal from the members survey - the following key themes emerged:
- Members equated sitting on more than just one council committee as demonstrating clear commitment to their role as a councillor
 - Without financially incentivising membership of more committees, fewer members would be willing to get involved
 - Recognition that membership of committees brings with it greater responsibility
 - Recognition that mandatory training will not be translated into application if members do not sit on committees, and
 - The experience of being a member of a committee ensures that all members are exposed to wider range of council procedures, policies and decisions.

Current profile of committee membership

30. In reviewing the number of councillors who sit on one or more council committees, the following breakdown was identified.
- The total number of members who sit on just the council committee is 5 (or just over 9% of all members).
 - The remaining 48 (or just under 91% of all members) sit on two or more committees.
31. In reviewing the number of councillors who sit on just full Council, but who take on additional representation on behalf of the council on outside bodies, the total number of members who sit on just the council committee, but who also attend additional meetings

on behalf of the council on outside bodies, the number of councillor who just attend full Council meetings reduces to three (or 5.66% of the total membership).

The time taken to carry out the role of a councillor

32. Of the 29 members (a 54.7% return) who responded, Table 1, below provides the following breakdown:

Table 1: Breakdown of the hours worked by Councillors

Non SRA Hours Worked Per Month	Lowest	Highest	Median
Q1: Attendance at council meetings	2	30	16
Q2: Attendance at other committee meetings	0	30	15
Q3: Meeting preparation (e.g. reading time)	1	40	20.5
Q4: Outside bodies representation (e.g. attendance at meetings)	0	20	10
Q5: Constituency based work (e.g. surgeries, email, calls)	12	80	46
Q6: Political group meetings relating to council business	0	20	10
Q7: Other	0	25	12.5
SRA Hours Worked Per Month	Lowest	Highest	Median
Q9: Attendance at council meetings	0	40	20
Q10: Meeting preparation (e.g. reading time)	0	80	40
Q11: Outside bodies representation (e.g. attendance at meetings)	0	40	20
Q12: Dealing with members of the public and other bodies	0	30	15
Q13: Briefing meetings with officers	0	40	20
Q14: Other	0	40	20

The balance of opinion offered by Group Leaders

33. Group Leaders jointly agreed that a sliding scale was a reasonable proposal and worth investigating as long as the money was available to implement it. They acknowledged that constituency work and committee work were equally important, but felt that in some instances committee work involved a greater time commitment to prepare for. Specific examples were provided to contextualise this – the amount of reading time and briefings were noted as being significant in terms of time required by members.
34. Group Leaders also noted that many members do above and beyond their expected duties, citing their (members') required attendance at parish council meetings alongside responding to community/constituency based enquiries. These routinely generate additional demands upon their time as a councillor which occur outside of normal working hours.

35. Group Leaders were all keen to stress to the Panel that cost neutrality was extremely important to them in relation to shaping new allowances and that decisions made need to be transparent and justifiable at a time when the public is facing a cost of a living crisis.

What the Regulations say

36. In considering the Regulations - each local authority must make provision in its scheme of allowances for a basic, flat rate, allowance payable to all elected Members of the authority. The Regulations set out that the Basic Allowance states that this should include: *“the time commitment of all councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers, constituents and attendance at political group meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of their home. Having established what local councillors do and the hours which are devoted to these tasks local authorities will need to take a view on the rate at which and the number of hours for which a councillor ought to be remunerated”*
37. The Panel was advised that in accordance with statutory guidance, an element of the role of an elected councillor must be viewed as voluntary and unpaid.

Do other Local Authorities apply similar schemes?

38. The Panel were keen to explore whether other local authorities have adopted similar schemes. Following a short officer review - no other sliding scale schemes linked to attending committees were identified as being in use within other local authority allowance schemes.

The Panel - Weighing up and triangulating the balance of this evidence

39. The Panel drew the following observations.
- The evidence presented shows that the vast majority of existing members sit on two or more committees under the current council system.
 - The introduction of two new committees is likely to present new opportunities and requirements for more members to sit on committee to ensure that each committee has full membership.
 - The Panel were mindful of the unanimous support given to the proposal of a sliding scale of the basic allowance linked to committee membership. But drew reference to the confidence in the member’s survey given the relatively low response rate.
 - That many members have noted already very high workloads and, for some, this leaves very little physical capacity to take on additional workloads
 - These combining factors often mean that the ‘voluntary’ aspects of the role (noted in paragraph 36 above) generates unrealistic expectations on members in terms of the time they spend in relation to the remuneration councillors can expect to receive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. The Panel do not recommend the introduction of a sliding scale due to concerns that this will unfairly penalise members who choose to prioritise constituency work over committee membership**
- 2. That Council consider reviewing committee membership again in one years’ time to ensure that councillors are playing as full a role as possible in the council’s decision making processes, given the introduction of two additional scrutiny committees**

Deputy Leader of the Council

40. The Panel considered whether a SRA should be attributed to the post of Deputy Leader. The Panel noted that in their report of May 2021 the following '*The Panel did not rate the post. However, if a request is made to rate this SRA separately to the Cabinet Member SRA, then the Panel would be happy to convene to consider*'.
41. The principal sources of evidence reviewed by the Panel to inform the Panel's deliberations on this matter were as follows:
- **The balance of member opinion**
 - **Feedback from Group Leaders, and**
 - **The benchmarking data**

The balance of member opinion from the member's survey

42. Of the 29 responders to the member's survey in relation to the question to whether the post of Deputy Leader should be remunerated, just under 77% of members agreed that it should. Just over 23% felt that it shouldn't.
43. In analysing the comments from the members survey - the following key themes emerged:
44. Of those in support -
- Members equated the role of Deputy Leader as being a highly responsible position, close to or on a par with the Leader of the council;
 - There was recognition of the additional work, beyond that of a Cabinet Member, that was linked to this post, and
 - Recognition of the additional risk entailed with the delivery of this role.
 - But that it should be a cost neutral option.
45. Of those not in support -
- Members felt the post was already sufficiently remunerated, given the post holder would be a cabinet member already drawing on an SRA.
 - Concern about the message this might send – if remunerating the post at a benchmark average rate – to the many families currently struggling with the inflating cost of living, and
 - If a new SRA were to be agreed there would need to be a clear role description to highlight the additional responsibilities that this post delivers

Feedback from Group Leaders

46. Group leaders were in agreement that the Deputy Leader position should attract an allowance. However, there was less consensus about the level at which it should be remunerated. But all were in agreement that it should be a cost neutral addition to the members' allowances scheme as a whole.

Do Other Local Authorities apply similar schemes?

47. In reviewing the benchmarking data, all but one (South Gloucestershire Council) of the local authorities in our cohort of comparable authorities do remunerate their deputy leader posts. The highest level of remuneration is East Riding of Yorkshire Council at a rate of £24,530. The lowest level of remuneration is Rutland Council at a rate of £14,232.

48. In reviewing this information, a mean average figure was proposed, from the benchmarking data, as the possible remuneration rate if a new SRA for deputy leader were to be proposed for Herefordshire. This comes out at £18,083 p/a. Just under 58% of members agreed that this was a reasonable proposed rate. Just over 42% did not agree that this was a reasonable rate.
49. In analysing the comments from the members survey on this question further - the following key themes emerged:
- Introducing a new SRA to remunerate this post is reflective of the importance of the role and the time and effort required to deliver it
 - The remuneration rate should be more reflective of the smaller authorities within the benchmarking cohort – perhaps equivalent to current committee chairpersons

The Panel's View

50. On balance, the evidence returned by members indicated more support than not for the proposed rate of £18,083 p/a – equivalent to just under 2.25 x the basic allowance. However, the Panel are mindful of the number of requests from members to ensure that if a new SRA is recommended, it is introduced on a cost neutral basis.
51. On instruction from the Panel, officers have explored ways in which a cost neutral SRA at 2.25 x the basic allowance could be achieved. There were two principal options offered to the Panel for their consideration. These are set out in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Options to introduce a new, cost neutral, Deputy Leader SRA.

Option 1 – transfer the 0.5 x the basic rate reduction to Leader's SRA (which takes place after the next election) to the Deputy Leader Post	
1 cabinet member SRA would no longer be paid (because it would need to be a cabinet member occupying the DL position).	£14,129.5
The SRA for a cabinet member post is £14,129.5 p/a	
After the election, the Leader's SRA reduces from 4 x the Basic Allowance (£32, 296 p/a) to 3.5 x the Basic Allowance.	£4,037
This 0.5 reduction transfers to a Deputy Leader Post.	
0.5 x £8,074 (current Basic Allowance rate) = £4,037 p/a	
Total:	£18,166.5
Equivalent to a 2.25 x the current Basic Allowance	
Option 2 – the Leader's SRA sacrifices a further proportion of the 3.5 x basic allowance to 3 x the Basic Allowance to a deputy leader post	
1 cabinet member SRA would no longer be paid (because it would need to be a cabinet member occupying the DL position).	£14,129.5
The SRA for a cabinet member post is £14,129.5 p/a	

3.25 x the Basic Allowance = £26,240.5 p/a	£4,037
0.5 x £8,074 (current Basic Allowance rate) = £4,073 p/a	
Total:	£18,166.5
Equivalent to a 2.25 x the current Basic Allowance	

RECOMMENDATION

- 3. A new SRA for the role of Deputy Leader is introduced, at a rate of 2.25 x the basic allowance, following the 2023 local elections, in line with the commencement of the new uplifted Basic Allowances rates.**
- 4. That option 1 in Table 1 above be applied to the new SRA to ensure it is introduced on a cost neutral basis.**

Chairpersons of Scrutiny

50. The Panel considered whether remuneration for the post of Chairpersons of the Scrutiny Committees should continue. Currently, all three scrutiny chairpersons receive an SRA on top of their basic allowance at a rate of 1.25 x the Basic Allowance. Equivalent to £9,000 p/a. The Panel acknowledged that a Council decision of 4 March 2022 had already been passed agreeing to there being two additional SRAs for the two additional committees to the current three.
51. The principal sources of evidence reviewed by the Panel to inform their deliberations on this matter were as follows:
 - **The balance of member opinion in the members survey**
 - **Feedback from Group Leaders, and**
 - **The benchmarking data**

The balance of member opinion from the member’s survey

52. Of the 29 responders to the member’s survey in relation to the question whether all Chairpersons of the scrutiny committees should continue to receive an SRA, just under 80% of members agreed that it should and just over 20% felt that it shouldn’t.
53. In analysing the comments from the members survey – of those who did agree that Chairpersons of scrutiny committee should continue to receive an SRA the following key themes emerged:
 - Being the Chairperson of a committee will bring with it a considerable time commitment
 - Chairmanship responsibilities should be recognised for all committees. It may be appropriate to pay a little more
 - The chairperson needs to spend time talking to officers, researching and talking to committee members along with briefings and agenda setting prior to the meeting
 - Being chairperson is a considerable extra commitment and requires a different skillset

54. In analysing the comments from the members survey – of those who didn't agree that Chairpersons of scrutiny committee should continue to receive an SRA the following key themes emerged:
- the system creates inequality between committee chairpersons and committee members who despite having to read all the same papers and attend the same meetings
 - the SRA should be removed as the workload is shared across the committee

Feedback from Group Leaders

55. Group Leaders were unanimously of the view that paying the chairpersons of scrutiny committees was in keeping with the role and the responsibility it brings. In addition, some group leaders offered similar views to those of other members, to recognise the workloads of committee members being similar or equally equivalent to that of Chairperson.

The Benchmarking Data.

55. In reviewing the benchmarking data, Herefordshire Council, of the local authorities in our cohort of comparable authorities remunerate our Scrutiny Chairpersons at the third highest rate, at £9,920 p/a. The highest level of remuneration is Shropshire Council at a rate of £12,000 p/a. The lowest level of remuneration is Cumbria Council at a rate of £7,301 p/a.

The Panel's View

56. On balance, the evidence returned by members indicated more support than not for the continuing remuneration to the chairpersons of scrutiny committees – equivalent to 1.25 x the basic allowance. Further, while it is not for the Panel to consider the budgetary implications of their recommendations, it was noted that the council has already factored in an additional resource implication for an SRA for the two new scrutiny chairpersons (as of 20 May, 2022)

Should the chairperson of the Scrutiny Management Board receive a larger SRA, given the broader remit of this committee?

57. The Panel considered whether remuneration for the post of Chairperson of the Scrutiny Management Board should receive a higher rate SRA than the four scrutiny committees sitting underneath this new committee. The Panel acknowledged that the Council had not factored in any additional resource implications for remunerating this position at a higher level in its recent approval of the new constitutional arrangements.
58. The principal sources of evidence reviewed by the Panel to inform their deliberations on this matter were as follows:

- **The balance of member opinion in the members survey**
- **Feedback from Group Leaders, and**
- **The benchmarking data?**

The balance of member opinion from the member's survey

59. Of the 29 responders to the members' survey in relation to the question as to whether the Chairperson of the Scrutiny Management Board receive a larger SRA, just under 54% of members agreed that the chairperson of the Scrutiny Management Board role should attract a higher rate SRA. Just over 46% felt that it shouldn't.

60. In analysing the comments from the members survey – of those who did agree that the Chairperson of the Scrutiny Management Board should receive an increased SRA to that of the four scrutiny committee chairs underneath this board - following key themes emerged:
- The allowance should reflect the weight of the wider remit and overarching responsibility for all scrutiny.
 - Due to the cross cutting themes an understanding of all meetings, reading and coordinating the 5 groups to scrutinise projects /policies
 - There is a lot of work before and during such a meeting. Also work involved outside meeting and there is responsibility in chairing such amalgamated meetings.
61. In analysing the comments from the members survey – of those who didn't agree that the Chairperson of Scrutiny Management Board should receive an increased SRA to that of the four scrutiny committees chairs underneath this board - following key themes emerged:
- It would be unfair to pay one type of Committee Chairperson more than another, all chairpersons share the same level of responsibility to be cross cutting
 - It is only a broader remit in name not work load.
 - Remit may be broader but unless time spent and responsibility is greater than there should be little difference to other scrutiny chairpersons.

Feedback from Group Leaders

62. Group Leaders were not convinced that an additional allowance should be paid to the chairperson of the Scrutiny Management Board. It is a new board with an evolving brief and it was felt that a wait and see approach should be adopted in terms of seeing how complex the role and its responsibilities prove to be. An informed decision can then be made as to whether there is a need for a special allowance above other scrutiny chairperson payments.

What the benchmarking data shows

63. The benchmarking data shows that Herefordshire has the third highest SRA rate within our comparator cohort of local authorities. The Panel also noted that it was not within the scope of this IRP to make recommendations on changes to the current remuneration of this SRA.

Recommendation

- 7. That all five chairpersons of the scrutiny committees maintain an SRA at the current rate.**
- 8. That no higher rate SRA is paid to the Chairperson of the Scrutiny Management Board at the current time.**
- 9. That this position is reviewed again in one year's time to examine whether this role does require greater levels of responsibility and time commitment.**

Task and Finish Group Chairpersons – should they receive a one off SRA.

62. The Panel considered whether a one off SRA payment for the post of Chairpersons of a task and finish group should be paid. The Panel noted their considerations of this proposal in their report to Council in May 2021. Alongside this, acknowledging the developing context and importance these groups are likely to play in the council's future policy and decision making considerations.

63. The Panel also noted the lack of incentives that current members have in taking on such a responsibility, including carrying the risk and accountability that the role entails. This is not to suggest that members are incentivised by financial motives to chair task and finish groups. But to consider the risk that members take on in undertaking these roles and whether this should carry a special responsibility allowance.
64. In their considerations, the Panel also noted the variable amount of time and complexity that T+F groups deal with. Further that with the improvement plans under way for scrutiny there is increasing importance being placed on task and finish group activity.
65. The principal sources of evidence reviewed by the Panel to inform their deliberations on this matter were as follows:
 - **The balance of member opinion in the members survey**
 - **Feedback from Group Leaders, and**
 - **The benchmarking data**

The balance of member opinion in the members' survey

66. Of the 29 responders to the members' survey in relation to the question whether chairs of a T+F group should receive an SRA, 75% of members agreed that it should attract a one off SRA. 25% felt that it shouldn't.
67. In analysing the comments from the members' survey – of those who did agree that T+F group chairs should receive an increased SRA – the following key themes emerged:
 - Task & finish groups can be difficult, special skills are needed so such allowance may help to involve Councillors.
 - There is a lot of work before and during a meeting. Also work involved outside a meeting and there is responsibility chairing such meetings.
 - An SRA allows them to allocate the time to the task and ensure a better job is done
 - It shouldn't just be the chairpersons of T+F groups who receive the SRA - a small allowance should be available for all members, given the sometimes considerable hours that go into this work
 - A task & finish group requires significant additional work – a higher rate one off allowance of £1000 might be more appropriate than £500.
68. In analysing the comments from the members' survey – of those who didn't agree that T+F group Chairs should receive an increased SRA the following key themes emerged:
 - It may encourage more to put themselves forward when money is involved not because it is right
 - Concerns that this may generate proliferation of T&Fs, not necessarily for the right reason
 - This in turn would mean that cost neutrality – within the allowance scheme - could be threatened

Feedback from Group Leaders

69. There was a general view that any payment should be spread between the chair and other members of the group. There was also recognition that officers tend to carry out most of the work in relation to research and report writing within these groups. Concerns were also raised about the potential for proliferation of T+F groups which in turn would generate

increased costs. Unnecessary T+F groups being formed for financial gain needed to be monitored and groups would need to be regulated.

The benchmarking data

70. Officers conducted a short review in relation to whether other local authorities within the benchmarking cohort provide an allowance for their task and finish group chairs. This review confirmed that no other authorities currently do pay their Chairs or members of a task and finish group an allowance.

Panel deliberations following review of this information.

71. Panel members acknowledged the strength of support presented by members in their responses to the members' survey. Further, the Panel also recognised that T+F groups vary in complexity and time commitment. The Panel were less persuaded that T+F group members should also be entitled to an allowance. They noted the concerns raised that this may encourage a proliferation of T+F group activity, which in turn could mean that scrutiny committee work may be curtailed as a result. In light of this new and additional evidence, the Panel were minded to offer the following recommendations

RECOMMENDATION

- 10. That given the current scrutiny improvement programme, a one off SRA is not provided to T+F group chairs at the current time.**
- 11. That, following the one year on review, this is looked at again and reconsidered by the Panel.**