

Appointment of Independent Remuneration Panel

Report number:	COU/WS/23/015	
Report to and date:	Council	26 September 2023
Cabinet member:	Councillor Gerald Kelly Portfolio Holder for Governance and Regulatory Tel: 07968 396389 Email: Gerald.kelly@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Selection Panel)	Councillor Carol Bull Tel: 01953 681513 Email: carol.bull@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Teresa Halliday Monitoring Officer Tel: 01284 757144 Email: Teresa.halliday@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: **Not applicable as this is not an executive matter**

Wards impacted: **Not applicable**

Recommendations: **It is recommended that Council:**

- 1. appoints the four individuals listed in Appendix A to Report number: COU/WS/23/015 to the Independent Remuneration Panel for a term of up to four years.**

- 2. No appointment be made to the role of advisor to the Independent Remuneration Panel for the reasons set out in section 2.3 of Report number: COU/WS/23/015.**

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 Elected members are entitled to receive an annual allowance which recognises their work and time commitment to the role. In addition, they are entitled to claim expenses for travelling and other costs incurred when undertaking their duties as a councillor. Those councillors who undertake additional duties, such as chairing a committee or acting as the lead member (portfolio holder) for an area of council activity, are entitled to an additional allowance due to the extra time they can incur in such duties.

The detail on the level of remuneration, allowances and expenses entitled by councillors forms the Members' Allowances Scheme. This must be produced in accordance with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the Regulations) and is required to be adopted by the Council.

- 1.2 The Regulations also require local authorities to establish and maintain an independent remuneration panel to make recommendations on the level of basic and special responsibility allowances and associated matters that are paid to councillors.
- 1.3 West Suffolk Council's Members' Allowances Scheme is required to be reviewed in full by a newly appointed independent remuneration panel. The panel will make recommendations to Council on the level of remuneration, allowances and expenses for councillors. These recommendations must be considered by the Council, although the Council may wish to agree alternative proposals proposed by its own members. A new scheme must be adopted by December 2023 before the current scheme expires in February 2024. The scheme will then be subject to annual review.
- 1.4 On 20 June 2023, Council agreed the process for appointing a minimum of three members to the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), together with an advisor to the panel, for a period of up to four years. The appointment process included forming a selection panel that would interview shortlisted applicants, and would make recommendations to the Council on whom to appoint.

- 1.5 The selection panel comprised:

Councillor Gerald Kelly	Portfolio Holder for Governance and member of the Independents Group
Councillor Carol Bull	Chair of the Selection Panel and member of the Conservative Group
Councillor Diane Hind	Member of the Progressive Alliance Grouping
Tracy Colman	Independent Person (of the Suffolk authorities' consortium)
Alex Wilson	Strategic Director
Teresa Halliday	Monitoring Officer

2. **Proposals within this report**

2.1 The positions were advertised from 31 July to 25 August 2023. Six applications were received for the role of member, one for the role of advisor and one application had been received for both roles. Seven were selected for interview for membership of the panel (including the applicant that had applied for both roles) with one selected for interview for the role of advisor.

2.2 **Panel members**

2.2.1 Prior to their interview, one candidate withdrew their application.

2.2.2 The selection panel has made recommendations based on ensuring that the Remuneration Panel comprises individuals with a good range of skills, experiences and insights. Candidates were probed during interview on their understanding of the process and familiarity of the existing Members' Allowances Scheme, their integrity, and their ability to work collaboratively as a team.

2.2.3 The individuals, whose biographies are summarised in Appendix A attached to this report, are recommended for appointment to the Independent Remuneration Panel.

2.3 **Advisor to the panel**

2.3.1 The role of the advisor is intended to help the IRP understand the potential workloads and needs of councillors, providing expert knowledge and insight to support the IRP as it carries out its work. Applicants were expected to have significant experience of local government through having served as a council officer or councillor for a period of time.

2.3.2 Prior to their interview, the candidate selected for interview withdrew their application. The other individual that had applied for this role, whilst interviewed for the member role, did not meet the criteria for advisor.

2.3.3 No recommendation has therefore been put forward by the selection panel for the role of advisor. Instead, the selection panel has recommended that the support to the IRP is provided by the Council's officers directly, as is often the case with many reviews of Members' Allowances Schemes. This support will include research (Policy Team support) legal / statutory guidance compliance (Monitoring Officer), and contextual information on how the Council operates at present and its future strategic direction (Leadership Team and Monitoring Officer).

3. **Alternative options that have been considered**

3.1 **Panel members:** The Council may decide not to appoint the individuals recommended by the selection panel to create a new independent remuneration

panel; however, having undertaken a robust recruitment process to select individuals that are deemed to meet the requirements set out in the person specification, including acknowledging the requirement to maintain and promote independence, openness and transparency, the selection panel feels appropriate recommendations have been made.

- 3.2 **Advisor to the panel:** The Council may decide that further efforts must be undertaken to appoint an individual as an advisor to the IRP; however, having already undertaken a robust recruitment process, including placing an advertisement for an advisor with the Local Government Association to target individuals that could potentially fulfil this specific role, the selection panel feels that this role will be satisfactorily met by Council officers, as set out in 2.3 above and as has happened previously. Also see paragraph 5.1 below.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 Engagement has been undertaken with the Council's Human Resources team on an appropriate recruitment process; and with the Communications team to promote the recruitment process.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 That the Council does not accept the recommendations of the selection panel and does not appoint a minimum of three members to create a new Independent Remuneration Panel. This would either require a further recruitment process to be undertaken which would significantly impact on the timeline for adopting a new Members' Allowances Scheme prior to the expiry of the existing scheme (see Report number: [COU/WS/23/011](#) considered on 20 June 2023 for timeline) or a scheme being adopted by Council without consideration by an IRP. There is a high risk that the requirements of the 2003 Regulations would not be met. The Council's current scheme allows for an index linked annual adjustment of allowances which must only be in place for a period of four years.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

- 6.1 Financial – each member of the IRP will receive £100 plus expenses for each meeting attended. Meetings will be held approximately three occasions per month during October to December 2023 with additional meetings held outside of this timeframe to potentially advise on matters relating to the annual review of the scheme and any other matters, as required.
- 6.2 Legal compliance – the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

- 6.3 Personal data processing – the appointment process for the IRP has been compliant with personal data processing procedures. Each individual listed in Appendix A have given consent for their information to be shared.
- 6.4 Equalities – The recruitment to these roles was undertaken using established recruitment processes which have full regard to equality and diversity policies.

7. Appendices referenced in this report

- 7.1 Appendix A – summarised biographies of the recommended appointees to the IRP

8. Background documents associated with this report

- 8.1 [The Local Authorities \(Members' Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2003](#)
- 8.2 The current [Members' Allowances Scheme](#) as contained in the Constitution
- 8.3 Council: 20 June 2023 - Report number: [COU/WS/23/011](#) Independent Remuneration Panel appointment process
[Appendix A](#) – terms of reference for the Independent Remuneration Panel
[Appendix B](#) – person specification for Independent Remuneration Panel member
[Appendix C](#) - person specification for advisor to the Independent Remuneration Panel