

**Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel
Review of Specific Roles associated with
the Members Allowance Scheme
11 July 2019**

In attendance: Stewart Towe (CBE) (Chair);

Ashley Savell-Boss;

Sylvia Parkin (MBE TD JP DL)

**Surjit Tour (Director Law and Governance and
Monitoring Officer);**

**Phil Challoner (Civic and Member Services
Manager);**

Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services Manager).

Scope of this Review

The Independent Remuneration Panel were asked to reconvene to assess three specific roles:-

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Chair

This role originally included responsibility for attending, participating in and reporting back on the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Scrutiny Committee Participation. The WMCA Scrutiny Committee typically involves a commitment to participate within additional working groups and task and finish groups at a regional level.

The responsibility for liaising with West Midlands Combined Authority Scrutiny and work streams has now been removed from the role for this Municipal Year.

The Panel noted that participation in WMCA scrutiny is one of the considerations of a current review of the scrutiny function which is part of a fundamental review of Governance.

The current special responsibility allowance for the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board is 60% of the Leader's Allowance. The Panel considered the impact of removing the regional-level responsibility to participate in the WMCA Scrutiny Committee and the oversight and coordination of all scrutiny board work. The Panel was of the view that as this was deemed to be in line with the role and responsibility of other scrutiny board chairs and, as such, the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) should also be amended from 60% to 33.3% of the Leader's Allowance to reflect the reduction in responsibility.

With the reduction in responsibility, the Panel enquired as to whom now had oversight for the WMCA work and whether their role description reflected this new responsibility. The Panel was informed that whilst Councillor Bostan was now the Council's nominated representative on the WMCA Scrutiny Committee, he was not the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee and therefore he did not have the same level of responsibility as that of the former Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board. The responsibility allowance for Councillor Bostan would therefore remain the same.

The Panel noted that a scrutiny review was currently underway and, in the event, that scrutiny roles and responsibilities changed in the future and/or any recommendations arising from the review relating to members' role description and responsibilities were identified, this would be reviewed, and the SRA considered by the Panel in due course.

Cabinet Advisor (formerly known as Member Champion)

The Member Champion role commenced in 2017-18 and received a SRA which equates to 33.3% of the Leader's Allowance. Originally these four roles covered:—

- Children and Youth
- Equality and Diversity
- Business

- Environment.

It was noted that from this municipal year, these roles are now known as Cabinet Advisors to reflect six newly established areas that closely link to Sandwell's Vision 2030 and Ambitions.

The purpose of the Cabinet Advisor role is to support the Executive relating to their area of expertise. They will also liaise with and gather Member opinion on policy issues relating to their area of expertise.

The portfolios for these Cabinet Advisor roles are:-

- Adult Social Care and Health;
- Housing;
- Children and Young People;
- Transport and Community Cohesion;
- Community and Neighbourhoods;
- Community Wealth Building.

During the meeting, the Panel asked to meet with the Leader of the Council who provided clarity of the role.

The Cabinet Advisor absorbs the role of the former Member Champion with closer working and a more joined up approach with the Cabinet to help deliver their portfolio aligned to the Vision 2030. Whilst not part of the executive, the Cabinet Advisor role enables non-executive members to help shape and influence the direction of travel for the Council and helps to utilise and grow individual's skills sets in policy development. The Panel was advised that the role would give clearer lines of accountability to the Cabinet as part of a holistic decision-making process. It was also recognised that this was an opportunity to train and develop members.

The Panel considered the revised role description and title change in comparison to the Member Champion role agreed as part of the fundamental review which took place in 2017. The Panel acknowledge the rationale for creating the Cabinet Advisor role and feel that the current SRA of 33.3% of the Leader's Allowance reflects the level of responsibility it entails.

Allowance for Deputy Mayor

As the first citizen of Sandwell, the Mayor currently receives a SRA of £20,808 (includes clothing allowance which, historically was paid separately). Historically, the Deputy Mayor of the Council would receive an allowance of £9,660. However, the SRA for the role of Deputy Mayor ceased at the end of the Municipal year of 2014/15.

When the IRP met in 2017, the Panel felt that the Deputy Mayor should receive an allowance where the Mayor is incapacitated for a period of time.

Since 2016, the Deputy Mayor has attended 254 events (without Mayor) and 71 (with Mayor) a total of 325 engagements. The Panel felt that from their experience, the visibility of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor has significantly increased over the years and that the Deputy Mayor plays a very important role in supporting the Mayor. Whilst the Panel was minded to agree that the Deputy Mayor should receive an allowance for the substantial work undertaken during their term of office, it was unclear why the SRA was ceased back in 2014/15. Consideration was also given as to whether the Deputy Mayor having successfully completed their term should then become Mayor for the following year. The Panel feel that a benchmarking exercise should be undertaken to explore whether neighbouring authorities pay a SRA for the role and to ascertain if the Deputy Mayor becomes Mayor the following municipal year. The Panel was therefore minded that this should be considered as part of the governance review being undertaken by the Council. Following this review and further information as to why the SRA was ceased, the Panel requested that a further report be submitted for them to consider whether an allowance should be reinstated for the role of Deputy Mayor.

Useful Information

In making its recommendations, the Panel had reference to the following documents:-

- Report to full Council – April 2017 on Governance Review of the Working Group (Appendix 1) to assist Role Description – Scrutiny Chair
- Report to full Council – October 2017 – last Independent Remuneration Panel Review on Members' Allowances Scheme
- Members Allowance Scheme which includes Schedule
- Role Descriptions – Cabinet Advisors

- WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda
- Vision 2030 and Ambitions

The Panel would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to meet again and look forward to reconvening when the governance and scrutiny reviews are completed.

Stewart Towe (Chair)

Ashley Savell-Boss

Sylvia Parkin

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