

SC 52/22

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING – 31 JANUARY 2022

REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

Report by David Stone, Corporate Services Manager and Rosalind Alderman, Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The NPA must adopt a new Scheme of Members' Allowances to run from 1 April 2022 onwards. As Members may recall, the adoption of a scheme of allowances is governed by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the Regulations). The NPA is required to adopt a Scheme annually, but may set allowances for up to four years if linked to a suitable index. Under the Regulations the NPA may, but need not, appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to assist it with arriving at a Scheme of Allowances, but in any event the NPA must have regard to the findings of any IRP convened by any of the local authorities that appoint members to the NPA. Although the Regulations do not specifically require Members to have regard to whether or not those authorities adopted their IRP's recommendations in full, this is also of interest and relevance in considering the NPA's Scheme.
- 1.2 The NPA last adopted a Scheme of Allowances with effect from 1 April 2018 for four years, which will accordingly expire on 31 March 2022. A small update to the scheme was made in June 2019 (this mainly dealt with claims for expenses through the HR Hub). Since 2018, the basic allowance has increased to £2,013.96 per annum in line with periodic staff cost of living pay awards, as provided for in the Scheme. A new uplift to staff pay awards (and consequently members' allowances) is currently being negotiated between employers and the unions and is anticipated to be finalised by February 2022. This report proposes that a Scheme of Allowances be adopted that retains the existing allowance of £2,013.96 pa (subject to any uplift for 2020/21) indexed to any NFNPA staff cost of living pay awards applied from 1 April 2022.
- 1.3 A suggested amendment to the current Scheme is to provide for an allowance payable to co-optees. Currently there are no co-optees appointed, but this may change in the future and it would be useful for this eventuality to be accommodated within the updated Scheme. Members may also recall that in October 2020 the Authority appointed two Independent Persons in accordance with s28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 for a four year term commencing on 11 December 2020. The Authority agreed an allowance of £141.72 per person per year (index linked in the same way as allowances payable under the Members' Scheme of Allowances) and it is suggested that any co-optee appointed by the Authority receive the same allowance on the same terms. Both the IP appointments and potential co-optees appointments are shown with tracked changes in the draft Scheme attached as Annex 1.
- 1.4 Little has changed over the last few years in terms of the work required of Members, and the NPA lacks the resources to convene an IRP. On these grounds it is suggested

that it would not be appropriate or necessary to convene a panel but that the Committee considers the recommendations of the IRPs convened by the following local authorities that appoint members to the NPA: Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council, Wiltshire Council, and Test Valley Borough Council – paragraph 2 of this report sets out the status of these authorities' schemes, includes links to any IRPs appointed and whether these were adopted by that Council.

2 Recommendations of IRPs convened by local authorities with Members appointed to the NPA

2.1 Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council's Scheme of Allowances was approved to commence for a one year period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 to allow the Council to consider a scheme for a four year period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2026. The Council's IRP met on 29 September 2021 and recommended a four year scheme which replicated the 2021/22 scheme linked to any annual pay award to staff. Below is a link to the 2021/22 Allowance scheme and a link to the IRP minutes on 29 September recommending approval of the four year scheme (see item 8 of the minutes of the IRP):

- [Part 4 - Appendix E - Members Allowances Scheme 2021-22 - June 2021.pdf \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Agenda for Independent Remuneration Panel on Wednesday, 29th September, 2021, 2.00 pm | About the Council | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)

The recommendations of the County Council's IRP were considered by the Employment in Hampshire County Council (EHCC) Committee on 11 November and their recommendations, which supported the IRP's recommendations without change, will be considered by the County Council at their meeting on 17 February 2022. Any changes made by the full Council will be reported to Committee members ahead of the report on the NPA's members' allowance scheme on 24 March 2022.

The Council's current basic allowance is £12,833 pa (index linked).

2.2 New Forest District Council

NFDC are appointing an IRP to look at their allowances again in the summer of 2022 which will be after the new scheme is adopted by the NPA on 24 March 2022.

The report of the Council's last IRP in 2018 can be found using the following link:- <https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/documents/s7670/Appendix%20to%20IRP%20Report.pdf>

The current basic allowance is £6,602 pa. Allowances are indexed to any staff pay award (this year's pay award is yet to be settled, so the members' allowance in the current scheme is subject to an uplift depending on the staff pay award which is still being negotiated).

The current members' allowance scheme can be found here - https://newforest.gov.uk/media/202/Members-Allowances-Scheme-2020-21/pdf/Members_Allowances_Scheme_2020-21.pdf?m=637463019083900000

2.3 Wiltshire Council

On [20 July 2021](#) (see minute item 25), Wiltshire Council received a report and recommendations from its Independent Remuneration Panel. There were a broad series of recommendations by the Panel, however most of these were not accepted by the Council in the light of the financial implications of the proposals and the existing Scheme was carried forward for 2021-25 with an update to carers' allowance and linked to any staff pay awards over the period. Below is a link to the Council's existing Scheme which came into effect on 1 April 2021 [Document \(16\) Part 13 - Members Allowance Scheme | Wiltshire Council](#).

Members' basic allowance is currently £13,833 pa.

2.4 Test Valley Borough Council

Test Valley Borough Council convened an IRP to consider allowances in October 2020 and its report can be found on our website as **Annex 2**. The Council adopted the recommendations of the IRP with the exception that, due to the pandemic, members would receive any increases in allowances in September rather than April.

The Council's current Scheme of Allowances can be found on our website as **Annex 3**. Members' basic allowance is £7,390 pa which is indexed to the CPI figure for the preceding September.

2.5 Other NPAs

Whilst there is no requirement to have regard to allowances paid by other National Park Authorities nor to any IRPs convened by them, this information may be of interest to the Committee, particularly in respect of the English National Parks, and officers have accordingly canvassed the other NPAs. Of the English NPAs (different rules apply in Wales), none have recently appointed their own IRPs. The basic allowances currently payable are as set out below:

| National Park | Basic Annual Allowance (£) | Date of Scheme adoption |
|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Broads | £1046.00 | 2011 (figures updated 2020) |
| Dartmoor | £1757.00 | April 2020 |
| Exmoor | £2814.72 | 2021 |
| Lake District | £3000.00 | 2021 |
| Northumberland | £1854.00 | 2020/21 |
| North York Moors | £2411.17 | April 2020 |
| Peak District | £2411.00 | April 2020 |
| South Downs | £3711.75 | April 2021 |
| Yorkshire Dales | £3268.00 | March 2021 |

3. NPA Scheme of Allowances

- 3.1 The Committee is now asked to consider allowances in the light of the various IRPs' recommendations as linked to this report, and to recommend a Scheme to the full Authority for adoption from 1 April 2022.
- 3.2 A draft Scheme of Allowances is attached as **Annex 1**, which is based on the basic allowance as currently payable (£2,013.96 per annum). Members are asked to recommend this Scheme or another Scheme of their choosing for adoption at the full Authority meeting on 24 March 2022. It is suggested that Members may wish to adopt a Scheme for a period of four years from April 2022, to be indexed to any increases in staff pay if applicable.

4. Recommendation

Members are asked to consider the draft Scheme of Allowances attached as Annex 1 to this report (and the recommendations of the IRPs convened by its appointing local authorities), and either:

- 1. Recommend to the full Authority that it adopt the draft Scheme attached as Annex 1 in full for four years with effect from 1 April 2022 with allowances increased in line with any annual NFNPA staff cost of living pay award applied from April 2022; or**
- 2. agree any such amendments to the draft Scheme as appropriate and recommend it to the full Authority for adoption with effect from 1 April 2022 for such period (up to four years if incorporating indexing) as appropriate.**