

# North Tyneside Council

## Report to Council

### Date: 14 March 2013

## ITEM 7

Title: Members'  
Allowances Scheme  
2013/14

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Portfolio(s): Elected Mayor

Cabinet Member(s): Mrs L Arkley

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Report from Directorate: Chief Executive's Office

Report Author: Viv Geary, Head of Law and Governance (Tel: 643 5339)

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Wards affected: All Wards

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### PART 1

#### 1.1 Purpose:

This report requests the Council to give consideration to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel in relation to the level of Members' allowances for 2013/14 and to agree a scheme of Members' allowances for 2013/14.

#### 1.2 Recommendation:

The Council is asked to approve a Members' Allowance Scheme for 2013/14.

#### 1.3 Forward plan:

Notice of this report first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 14 November 2012.

#### 1.4 Council plan and policy framework:

This report has no direct relevance to the Council's Strategic Plan priorities or to the Policy Framework.

#### 1.5 Information:

##### 1.5.1 Details

Following consultation with the Leaders or Deputy Leaders of each of the Political Groups represented on the Council, the Independent Remuneration Panel has given consideration to the level of Members' allowances for 2013/14.

The Panel has previously carried out detailed research on Members' allowances which demonstrates that the Council's allowances are significantly out of line with national and regional allowances. The Panel believes that the current North Tyneside Members'

Allowance Scheme does not recognise the commitment required to fulfil the various roles of a councillor, nor does it provide sufficient recompense for undertaking those various roles. Whilst acknowledging the current economic climate and the financial pressures affecting local authorities, the Panel is of the view that steps need to be taken to start to bring the level of allowances in North Tyneside into line with allowances paid elsewhere in the region. The Panel noted the fact that the Council has previously agreed that Members' allowances should be index linked to the NJC employees (formerly APT&C staff) annual pay award but that no pay award has been made over recent years. The Panel has therefore recommended that the level of basic allowance be increased by £200 as a first step towards bringing the level of allowances up to an appropriate level. The Panel also recommends that further consideration be given to a mechanism for reviewing and rationalising the Members' Allowances Scheme in future years in respect of special responsibility allowances

In addition the Panel gave consideration to Dependent Carers Allowance and agreed that the current level of allowance based on the national minimum wage was appropriate. The Panel also considered the eligibility criteria and recommend that the criteria as set out in the report (Appendix 1) be adopted as this will provide greater clarity in respect of the circumstances for which the allowance could be claimed.

The Panel was also requested to give consideration to the payment of expenses for attendance at political group meetings. The Panel was advised that there was no power to apply the Council's resources for party political purposes and therefore did not consider that it was empowered to recommend any change to the allowances scheme in respect of the payment of expenses for attendance at political group meetings.

The Panel also gave consideration to members' use of ICT equipment and suggested that, in view of the increasing number of members making use of their own ICT equipment, a consolidated allowance for the provision of ICT equipment be incorporated into the allowances scheme. This would permit elected members to obtain equipment and services which meet their individual requirements and reduce the burden of submitting and processing individual claims. It is suggested that an allowance of £200 per annum, to cover the provision of telephones, computer equipment and broadband services, be made.

### **1.5.2 Further Review of the Allowances Scheme**

In the light of the Panel's recommendation (at 7.4 of the Panel's Report at Appendix 1) that further consideration be given at an early stage to creating a mechanism to raise the level of allowances in North Tyneside towards the average of the Tyne and Wear, Durham and Northumberland Councils, over an appropriate period, the Panel has also agreed that it will take forward a comprehensive review of the issues surrounding members' allowances and the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme. It is anticipated that this review will commence in June 2013 with a view to reporting back to Council in advance of the next budget setting process.

### **1.6 Decision options:**

The Council can:

- (i) Approve the recommendation to make changes to Members' Allowances for 2013/14; or
- (ii) Approve alternative levels of Members' Allowances for 2013/14; or

- (iii) Retain the current scheme without amendment pending the comprehensive review to be undertaken in 2013/14, as described at paragraph 1.5.2,

### **1.7 Reasons for recommended option:**

To ensure that a Members' Allowances Scheme is in force.

### **1.8 Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel

### **1.9 Contact officers:**

Dave Parkin – Law and Governance (Tel. 6435316)  
Alison Campbell – Finance Services (Tel. 6437038)

### **1.10 Background information:**

The following background papers and research reports have been used in the compilation of this report and are available for inspection at the offices of the author.

Members' Allowances Scheme  
The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended).

## **PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING**

### **2.1 Finance and other resources**

Provision has been made within contingencies in the 2013/2014 Budget for a potential increase of Members' allowances. The proposed increase of £12,000 in the overall allowances budget can be accommodated in this way.

### **2.2 Legal**

The Council is required to approve a Members' Allowances Scheme each year, following advice from the Independent Remuneration Panel, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended).

### **2.3 Consultation/community engagement**

The leader or deputy leader of each of the political groups and senior officers have been consulted on the proposals set out in the report.

### **2.4 Human rights**

The proposals within this report do not themselves have direct implications in respect of the Human Rights Act 1998.

### **2.5 Equalities and diversity**

There are no direct equalities or diversity implications arising from this report.

## 2.6 Risk management

The risks associated with this report will be managed in accordance with the North Tyneside Council risk management process.

## 2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

## 2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no direct environment and sustainability implications arising from this report.

### PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive  X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member  X
- Chief Finance Officer  X
- Monitoring Officer  X
- Strategic Manager,  
Policy, Partnerships  
Performance and Communities  X