

Meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel at Maldon District Council

Friday 17th February 2023

Panel Meeting Notes & Recommendations

In attendance:

Russell G Everard, Terri Dinn & Andrew Mugford

Annette Cardy, Maldon DC (in advisory capacity)

Project Brief:

Review SRAs to ensure they are fairly applied and consistent with other Local Authorities.

Background:

1. Member allowances and SRAs paid across all English authorities, not just those in Essex, have been in place for many years. The latest Regulation came into force in 2003 ([www link below](#)). It is difficult, if not impossible, to make direct comparisons with any other authority. The only common approach currently appears to be with adjustments being made to Members' basic allowance in line with Officer pay reviews and adjustments to vehicle mileage claims by the HMRC. This of course has direct impact on the monetary value of all SRAs.
2. Member allowances have evolved over a long period of time, certainly before 2003, with various adjustments and amendments being made to accommodate changes in local governance arrangements, expenses in connection with IT, and new Regulations. The Panel noted that there is no requirement to pay SRAs using a particular % or formula, and the guidance is very much open to interpretation.

Panel Comments & Observations:

3. Panel members took the opportunity to take a detailed look at some of the key 'numbers' associated with Maldon DC and the 10 other authorities in Essex, excluding the unitary authorities of Southend and Thurrock. It was interesting to note that Maldon and Brentwood both operate with a committee structure and are positioned 10th and 11th with the lowest number of residents represented per elected Member. From the figures provided, Basildon Members appear to represent more than twice the number of residents than Maldon or Brentwood.

(It should be noted that this observation does not take into consideration any geographical boundaries of Wards, and is just a calculation of total number of residents in the district divided by number of Members.)

4. There are also nine Essex authorities operating a cabinet structure, two of which are now city councils, hence the challenge with making any direct comparisons with roles and responsibilities at Maldon District Council.

5. From the Panel's research it would appear that authorities similar to Maldon, including a sample taken from outside Essex, have all taken a pragmatic approach to establishing an allowance and SRA scheme which reflects their own needs. The Panel reviewed information collated by Officers, including details of SRAs for 15 other local authorities outside Essex.
6. Subject to implementation of two recommendations detailed below, from the work undertaken by the Panel prior to, during and following their meeting, and in consideration of the information available at that time, the Panel is of the opinion that the SRAs currently paid to elected Members at Maldon District Council **ARE** being fairly applied and **ARE** consistent, as far as the Panel can reasonably ascertain, with other local authorities.
7. Consistent with the comments in (6) the Panel is also of the opinion that the levels of SRAs awarded to the roles of Council Chairman and Council Leader at Maldon DC are being fairly applied and are also consistent with other authorities, as far as the Panel can ascertain.

Recommendations:

The Independent Remuneration Panel recommends that:

1. The role of District Planning Chairman be awarded a Special Responsibility Allowance of 37.5%. The Panel understands that this role is currently not receiving an SRA and is of the opinion that this anomaly should be addressed as early as possible.
2. The SRA currently paid to the Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee be reviewed to 37.5% to reflect the infrequency of meetings and the workload (two meetings during the current civic year).

Panel Reference documents:

- The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2003/1021/contents/made>
- Comparison of Members Allowances in Essex Districts 2022
- Percentage of Basic Allowance for Special Responsibility at Maldon DC
- Committee meeting frequency, duration and attendance at Maldon DC
- SRA values for the local authorities of Malvern Hills, Melton, Bromsgrove, West Devon, Derbyshire Dales, Richmondshire, Tewkesbury, Babergh, Hambleton, Lichfield, Stroud, Wychavon, Mid Suffolk, East Hampshire and Mid Devon.

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