

Independent Remuneration Panel for District Councils in Worcestershire

7th June 2011

Changes to Special Responsibility Allowances

Bromsgrove District Council

Representations have been made by the Leader of Bromsgrove District Council for changes to be made to the levels of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) payable in 2011/12 for the positions indicated in the table below.

Position	Current SRA	Multiplier of Basic Allowance	Suggested SRA	Multiplier of Basic Allowance	Comments
Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Board	£3,197	0.87 (Band 6)	£4,796	1.30 (Band 9)	Increase SRA to match level payable to Portfolio Holder
Chairman of Planning Committee	£3,676	1.00 (Band 8)	£4,796	1.30 (Band 9)	Increase SRA to match level payable to Portfolio Holder
Leader of largest Opposition Group	None	-	£1,066	0.29 (Band 3)	New SRA to reflect the increased size of the main opposition group and level of responsibility of the leader of that group

Background Details

1. Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Board

The Committee Structure of Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) was reviewed in late 2010. Prior to this review there were 3 separate Boards dealing with Overview and Scrutiny functions – namely an Overview Board, a Scrutiny Board and a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board. As a result of this review the 3 Boards were combined into one Overview and Scrutiny Board. This new Board also took on some functions previously undertaken by a Performance Management Board which ceased to exist as a result of this review.

The Chairmen of the former Overview Board, Scrutiny Board and Performance Management Board were each paid an SRA of £3,197. The Chairman of the former Joint Overview & Scrutiny Board received an SRA of £1,599 on the basis that this met around 4 times per year compared to the other Boards which met each month.

Having created the new Overview & Scrutiny Board it was agreed that the level of SRA payable to the Chairman should match the level of SRA payable to the Chairmen of the former Overview Board, Scrutiny Board and Performance Management Board (i.e. £3,197).

Upon further reflection it is considered that this level of SRA is too low given that the new Board has absorbed the functions of the previous separate Boards and therefore the Chairman has a greater level of responsibility than that of the predecessor Chairmen. Furthermore, as the Overview & Scrutiny Board is the Board which holds the Executive Cabinet to account it is considered appropriate for the level of SRA payable to the Chairman of the Board to match the level of SRA payable to a Cabinet Member/Portfolio Holder (i.e. £4,796 (Band 9) based on a multiplier of 1.30).

The Panel is asked to note that within the County, recommendations were previously agreed for Wychavon District Council and Malvern Hills District Council to pay the same level of SRA to their Executive Portfolio Holders and Chairmen of their Overview and Scrutiny Committees. In these cases the recommended levels of SRA for 2011/12 were £6,300 based on a multiplier of 1.50 of their Basic Allowance. The suggested new SRA for the Chairman of Bromsgrove District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board in the sum of £4,796, based on a multiplier of 1.30 of its Basic Allowance, compares favourably with the position in those Councils.

2. Chairman of Planning Committee

The Planning Committee at Bromsgrove District Council deals with major planning applications across the District and applications that have been 'called-in' by Ward Members for determination by the Planning Committee rather than under officers' delegated powers. Officers have delegated powers to deal with minor planning applications. The Planning Committee meets every month.

The Leader of the Council is of the view that the responsibility of the Chairman of the Planning Committee is on a par with that of a Portfolio Holder, particularly given the sensitive and controversial applications with which the Committee has to deal with and the public speaking rights which are in place allowing speakers for and against each application. It is therefore suggested that the SRA payable to the Chairman of the Planning Committee be increased to match that of a Portfolio Holder (i.e. (£4,796 (Band 9) based on a multiplier of 1.30).

3. Leader of the Largest Opposition Group

Historically Bromsgrove District Council paid an SRA to the Leader of the Opposition and leaders of other opposition groups. In some years these were flat rate payments and in other years the payments were a combination of a flat rate element and a sum per member of the group. This changed from 2010/11 when such SRAs ceased to be included within the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme. This change came about as a result of two opposition groups being of equal size and a decision being taken by the full Council that the position of Leader of the Opposition should cease to exist as a formal position.

As a result of the recent Local Elections there is now a significant main opposition group (10 members out of a total of 39) and a small opposition group of 2 members. It is therefore considered appropriate for an SRA to be reinstated for payment to the Leader of the largest Opposition Group to reflect the time, effort and responsibility associated with being the holder of that post. It is suggested that the level of SRA payable to the Leader of the largest Opposition Group be £1,066 (Band 3 based on a multiplier of 0.29)

Recommendation

The Panel is asked to consider and agree to recommend to Bromsgrove District Council that the changes set out above be approved.

Karen Firth

Committee Group Leader

Bromsgrove District Council