

**NORTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL /
SLEAFORD TOWN COUNCIL
INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL
IN RESPECT OF THE PAYMENT OF BASIC ALLOWANCES BY
SLEAFORD TOWN COUNCIL**

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

At a meeting of Sleaford Town Council held on 2 August 2017, consideration was given to a report from the Clerk to the Town Council in respect of the payment of basic allowances to its councillors. It was decided to instruct the Clerk to request a review by the North Kesteven District Council's Independent Remuneration Panel.

The elected councillors of Sleaford Town Council are currently entitled to claim a basic allowance of £408 per annum which equates to £34.00 per calendar month. This basic allowance was last reviewed several years ago.

2.0 STATUTORY POSITION

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) provide for the payment of allowances to members of local authorities. Part 5 of those Regulations specifically relates to the payment of allowances to members of town and parish councils.

When the Regulations were first introduced they applied to elected members only and not to those who were co-opted. Whilst there has been some relaxation of this provision, it would appear that co-opted members are still not entitled to receive the basic allowance. However, this is not a matter for the Remuneration Panel to advise upon and the Town Council should seek its own advice. If considered to be appropriate it could make representations through the appropriate channels.

3.0 CONSIDERATIONS

In reaching its recommendations the Remuneration Panel has had regard to a number of matters, including the following:

3.1 Purpose of the Basic Allowance

The basic allowance is not intended to be a salary for the work undertaken by town councillors, but it should ensure that they are not out of pocket. There is an expectation that an element of the time that councillors (at all levels) spend on council business should be on a voluntary basis.

3.2 Comparative Data

The Remuneration Panel received some comparative data from the Town Council in respect of the basic allowance that other town councils were paying. The Panel also obtained further comparisons to ensure that it had a broad range of data from both within Lincolnshire and further afield. The Panel found a considerable variation in what other town councils were paying and many did not pay any basic allowance.

The Remuneration Panel have a considerable amount of data in respect of the basic allowance that district councils pay to their members. Although the Remuneration Panel had regard to this, it was not considered to be particularly relevant as the responsibilities and size of budgets vary significantly between district and town councils.

3.3 Responsibilities and Time Spent on Council Business

The work of the Town Council and the amount of time spent by councillors on Town Council business is relevant. Members of the Remuneration Panel obtained information from the Town Council's website in this respect. The Chairman of the Panel also attended a meeting of Sleaford Town Council on 20 September 2017 with a view to obtaining a better insight into the work of the Council and its members.

Immediately following the close of the meeting of the Town Council on 20 September, members of the Council were afforded an opportunity to talk to the Chairman of the Remuneration Panel. Several councillors did so and provided further information in respect of the work that they did and time spent on Town Council business.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Having regard to the considerations of the Remuneration Panel and the information available to it, particularly as detailed in Section 3 above, the Panel recommends:

Recommendations:

1. That a basic allowance of £800 per annum could be paid to elected members of Sleaford Town Council;
2. That because a basic allowance of £800 per annum would be a considerable increase, the Town Council may wish to consider phasing the increase in over a two year period.

5.0 GENERAL COMMENTS

The Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendations are provided in Section 4.0 above. In determining the level of basic allowance to be paid to its elected members the Sleaford Town Council should have regard to the Panel's recommendations. If it decides not to follow those recommendations it is suggested that the Town Council should give reasons. The Panel appreciates that when the Town Council considers the matter, it will have additional factors that it must take into account, e.g. impact on its budget.

The Town Council should ensure that the requirements for publicity, as detailed in the Regulations, are adhered to.

Independent Remuneration Panel:

Jim Scarsbrook – Chairman
David Lomas
John Shaw

Dated: 9 October 2017