



Date of meeting:	14 November 2023
Subject	The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales's Draft Report
Recommendation	The Democratic Services Committee is asked for comments in order to form a response to the Independent Remuneration Panel's draft report consultation.
Contact Officer:	Vera Jones, Democracy and Language Services Manager

What is the background and relevant considerations?

1. The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales publishes a draft report every year in October. It outlines the proposal for the subsequent financial year. The draft was published at the end of October 2023, outlining the proposed changes for the 2024-25 financial year. There is an opportunity to respond to the recommendations by 8 December 2023. This year they have drawn up a list of specific questions to answer as part of the consultation.
2. The draft changes, should they come into force, will be published by 28 February 2024 and will be effective for the 2024-25 financial year.

The Role of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

3. The Panel's responsibility is to set the salary levels of Wales' Councillors, and their role is fully independent. Since its establishment, the Panel has expressed regularly and firmly that local democracy and public service governance is not cost-free, and that a value must be given to them if we are to enable everyone to participate. It is important to promote a culture that encourages individuals to receive remuneration to ensure that people from all parts of society can participate confidently in our democracy.
4. In addition, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 makes it a requirement for the Panel to consider the financial implications of its decisions. The Panel has had to seek to balance both elements in parallel every year as it makes its decisions.

The Panel's Main Decisions relevant to the Council

5. A full copy of the report in its draft form is available by clicking on the following link.

[Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales: draft annual report 2024 to 2025 \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

6. Note that the Panel has recently changed its method of reporting, by only reporting on the changes in their annual reports. This can be difficult to follow at times as it is necessary to go back to previous annual reports to fully understand the situation for some matters when 'no other changes' is reported. The Panel has noted that they will need to look at the matter again.

Remuneration for Elected Members.

7. The basic salary, which is paid to every elected member, is remuneration for the responsibility of representing the community and participating in the scrutiny and regulatory work and the functions associated with local governance. This is based on an amount that equates to three full days a week. The Panel reviews this time commitment regularly, and no changes are proposed for 2024 - 2025.
8. The Panel has decided, for the financial year running from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, that it is right to maintain the link between the basic salaries of councillors and the average salaries of their electors.
9. The basic salary will be **£18,666**. The payment for 2023/24 is £17,600.

Higher Salaries for Elected Members

10. There has been no change to the maximum higher salaries that can be paid. 18 is the maximum number of higher salaries that can be paid to Group B authorities, which includes Cyngor Gwynedd.
11. The table below shows the details of Group B payments for 2023-24.

	The likely remuneration payment for 2024/25	Remuneration Payment for 2023/24
Basic salary (payable to every elected member)	£18,666	£17,600
Band 1: leader	£62,998	£59,400
Band 1: deputy leader	£44,099	£41,580
Band 2: executive members	£37,799	£35,640



Band 3: committee chairs (if they receive a recognition payment)	£27,999	£26,400
Band 4: the leader of the largest opposition party	£27,999	£26,400
Band 5: leaders of other political groups	£22,406	£21,340

12. The posts of the civic head and the deputy civic head have not been included in the cap. The civic heads are senior posts in councils and they are different to political or executive leadership. As well as chairing important meetings, the civic head is the 'first citizen' and the authority's 'ambassador', who represents the council in its dealings with all types of organisations and bodies.

13. The level for 2023/24 has been set as follows:

Civic Head	£27,999 (£26,400 in 2023/24)
Deputy Civic Head	£22,406 (£21,340 in 2023/24)

Co-opted Members

14. This year, the Panel has given attention to matters related to payments for Co-opted Members (see "Decision 5" in the consultation document despite the fact that the title refers to payments made to elected Members).

15. The current arrangements note that Co-opted Members should get financial remuneration on a day or half day basis, with a relevant officer of the authority deciding on the total number of days for which financial remuneration is given in one year, and appoint reasonable time to prepare for meetings.

16. Due to changes to work practices such as more frequent on-line briefing meetings etc., the panel has considered offering flexibility when paying co-opted Members, including an hourly rate as noted in Table 3 of the consultation (copy below)

17. Table 3: Payments made to Principal Councils' Elected Members, National Parks Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities

Role	Hourly rate payment	Payment rate up to 4 hours	Payment rate 4 hours and above
Standards Committee Chairs, and Audit Committees	£33.50	£134	£268
General members of Standards committees that also chair Standards	£29.75	£119	£238



Committees for Town and Community Councils			
General members of Standards Committees, Education Scrutiny Committee, Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee	£26.25	£105	£210
Town and Community Councillors that are Members of Principal Councils' Standards Committees	£26.25	£105	£210

Other costs

18. No further changes are made to the payments and benefits paid to elected members therefore all other decisions from 2023/2024 still stand and they should be applied to 2024/25.
19. It should also be noted that the report refers to matters relating to Town and Community Councils, but this is not elaborated upon in this report.

Consultation Questions

20. Six questions have been included in the consultation (see **Appendix A**). Note that there are some specific questions to the above consultation and some asking for an opinion on possible decisions for the future. Observations on the following fields are requested:

Question 1. Balance between affordability and sufficient financial remuneration for representatives?

Question 2. Opinion on the flexibility of payments to Co-opted Members

Question 3. Good practice in terms of using the Panel's powers to encourage more sustainable travel amongst Members.

Question 4. Awareness of the Councillors' rights for reimbursements and the steps to improve that.

Question 5. Town and Community Councils

Question 6. Opinion on reports for the future to merge Members' travel and subsistence costs instead of per individual.

Recommendation

21. The Democratic Services Committee is asked for:

- comments in order to form a response to the Independent Remuneration Panel's draft report consultation.