

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Name of activity:	Tenth Review of the Members' Allowances Scheme	Date Completed:	18 January 2024
Directorate / Division responsible for activity:	Law & Governance	Lead Officer:	Jane Fulton
Existing Activity	N	New / Proposed Activity	Y
		Changing / Updated Activity	N

What are the aims / main purposes of the activity?

The review of the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme is undertaken by an Independent Remuneration Panel appointed by the Council's Audit & Governance Committee. The IRP is appointed and undertakes its reviews of the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme in line with The Local Authority (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

These Regulations confirm that an authority should review its Members' Scheme of Allowances every four years. As the last full review of the Members' Allowances Scheme was undertaken and approved by Council in July 2019, a full review has been undertaken.

The Panel has undertaken a review of the following parts of the Members' Allowances scheme:

- The Basic Allowance [paid to all 54 Councillors]
- Special Responsibility Allowances [paid to Councillors holding a position of additional responsibility for example Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees; the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council; the Leader of the Opposition and Leaders of small minority groups]
- Co-opted Members and Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel; Members and Witnesses to Committees and Panels
- Carer's Allowance – the childcare allowance and Dependent Adult Allowance
- Arrangements for Adoption, Maternity and Paternity for Members in line with the scheme in place for Officers
- Travel and subsistence allowances
- Town and Parish Council allowances

What are the main actions and processes involved?

To fulfil the Council's obligations in ensuring that it complies with The Local Authority (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 in approving its scheme of allowances.

Who is intended to benefit & who are the main stakeholders?

In fulfilling the Council's obligations and in ensuring that it complies with The Local Authority (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 – the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme will:

- Ensure that access to democracy is open to all. That those wishing to stand as a Councillor at future elections or have been elected as a Councillor are not penalised financially in undertaking their role and to remove any barriers that might prevent anyone from considering standing as a Councillor
- Ensure that a realistic Carer's Allowance is paid covering childcare and the dependent adult allowance.
- Ensure that feedback from Town and Parish Councils in terms of the allowances that they are entitled to pay under the Regulations are also reviewed and updated.

The key stakeholders are:

- Arun District Councillors
- Town and Parish Councillors
- Independent Persons of the Standards Committee
- The Independent Remuneration Panel [IRP]
- Co-optees Members and witnesses to Committees and Panels
- The Officer team supporting the IRP – Committee Services Manager; the Group Head of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer; the Finance Team

- South East Employers – using their benchmarking data
- Other authorities operating a Committee system form of governance

Have you already consulted on / researched the activity?

The Audit & Governance Committee received and noted a scoping report on 25 July 2023 setting out how the review would be undertaken; the timetable for the review; and the actions that would be undertaken in undertaking this exercise.

A Seminar for all Members of the Council was held on 4 September 2023 to introduce Members to the IRP and to explain the key components forming the review of the scheme.

A questionnaire was sent to all Members of the Council to complete asking questions on all aspects of allowances paid.

Interviews were held with Councillors and Officers over November and December 2023.

Town and Parish Councils were consulted on the proposals in December 2023.

Impact on people with a protected characteristic (What is the potential impact of the activity? Are the impacts high, medium or low?)

Protected characteristics / groups	Is there an impact (Yes / No)	If Yes, what is it and identify whether it is positive or negative
Age (older / younger people, children)	Yes positive	The Members' Allowances Scheme can pay a Childcare Allowance or an Adult Carers Allowance to those that have childcaring or adult caring responsibilities.

Disability (people with physical / sensory impairment or mental disability)	Yes positive	The Council operates a travel and subsistence scheme. An assessment is undertaken with any Councillor who has physical/sensory impairment or a mental disability to ensure that they can undertake their role with the provision of suitable IT equipment and in terms of safely accessing and exiting either the Arun Civic Centre or Bognor Regis Town Hall.
Gender reassignment (the process of transitioning from one gender to another.)	No	There are no known implications.
Marriage & civil partnership)	No	There are no known implications.
Pregnancy & maternity (Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant & maternity refers to the period after the birth)	Yes Positive	There is no known impact for Councillors due to pregnancy or maternity. The Local Government Act 1972, Section 85 confirms that a Councillor must attend a meeting to which they have been appointed to for a consecutive period of six months otherwise this would lead to their disqualification as a Councillor. The Council is able to approve a dispensation to allow an extended period beyond six months in certain circumstances. It is intended that pregnancy and maternity requests are dealt with in this way.
Race (ethnicity, colour, nationality or national origins & including gypsies, travellers, refugees & asylum seekers)	No	There are no known implications.
Religion & belief (religious faith or other group with a recognised belief system)	No	There are no known implications.
Sex (male / female)	No	There are no known implications.
Sexual orientation (lesbian,	No	There are no known implications.

gay, bisexual, heterosexual)		
Whilst Socio economic disadvantage that people may face is not a protected characteristic; the potential impact on this group should be also considered	No	There are no known implications.

What evidence has been used to assess the likely impacts?
The review of the Members' Allowances Scheme has been undertaken in line with the Local Authority (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. It makes recommendations around the paying of allowances in line with legislation. This includes confirming the detail around areas such as childcare and adult caring responsibilities that Councillors may have and how the Council can assist Councillors in undertaking their responsibilities in these areas. It also makes recommendations around adoption, maternity and paternity options.

Decision following initial assessment			
Continue with existing or introduce new / planned activity	Y	Amend activity based on identified actions	N

Action Plan			
Impact identified	Action required	Lead Officer	Deadline

Monitoring & Review

Date of last review or Impact Assessment:	This is the first time an EIA has been completed in reviewing the Members' Allowances Scheme
Date of next 12-month review:	If approved by Council on 13 March 2024, the recommendations will come into force from 1 April 2024
Date of next 3-year Impact Assessment (from the date of this EIA):	The scheme will be reviewed again in 2027 unless any changes to the governance structure of the council take place within this timeframe

Date EIA completed:	18 January 2024
Signed by Person Completing:	Jane Fulton – Committee Services Manager