

Report of: The Independent Remuneration Panel of Blackpool Council

To: Blackpool Council

## **Special Responsibility Allowance in respect of the Second Opposition Leader**

### **1.0 Introduction and background**

1.1 On 19 June 2018, a second opposition group was formed called the Independent Blackpool Residents Group. This prompted a review of the political balance arrangements for committees. The Council agreed at its meeting on 27 June 2018 agreed to those political balance changes and in doing so asked this Panel to consider whether a Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid for the Group Leader and if so, what that should be.

1.2 The meeting took place on 5 September and comprised:

Mr Tony Mozley (Chairman for the meeting)  
Mrs Helen Hockenhull  
Mr Greg Molyneux

1.3 Mr Peter Whitehead, member and Chairman of the Panel had submitted his resignation prior to the meeting due to work commitments. Panel members noted that Mr Whitehead had been on the Independent Remuneration Panel since it was originally formed in November 2001 and had acted as Chairman in recent years. The Panel wished to place on record its thanks to Mr Whitehead for his knowledge and experience over the years and wished him well for the future.

### **2.0 Considerations for Special Responsibility Allowance**

2.1 At the time of the decision of Council in June 2018, the Independent Blackpool Residents Group consisted of two individuals (Councillor Debbie Coleman and Councillor Gary Coleman). It was noted that Councillor Ian Coleman had also recently joined the Group.

2.2 During the last full review of the Members' Allowances scheme in 2015, consideration had been given to an allowance for a second Opposition Group Leader, but no decision had been made as there had been only two political parties represented on the Council at the time and a second opposition group had not been formed/ returned.

2.3 The Panel had recommended as part of that review however (which was subsequently agreed by Council) that a formulae should be in place for determining the Principal Opposition Group Leader based on the percentage of seats in that Group and a similar approach would have been used should a second opposition group have been returned. At that time, a minimum group size of 10% of the number of members on the Council had been considered for the second Opposition Group.

### **3.0 Benchmarking information**

3.1 The Panel was provided with information on comparative data from a range of authorities around the country on how they remunerate second opposition group leaders. There was a variety of ways in which allowances for second opposition groups were calculated and the research provided summarised a range of different alternatives. One comparative factor was that a number of councils had a minimum group size of 10% of the overall number of members on the Council.

3.2 Consideration was also given to how the second opposition group leader had been remunerated in Blackpool in the past, however it was noted that this had not been in place since prior to the election in 2011 and the criteria and formulae used had since been fully reviewed and changed when the full Members Allowances review had been undertaken in 2015 (our report to Council on 8 July 2015 refers).

### **4.0 Treatment of allowances**

4.1 The Panel considered that once Council had made its final decision, this decision should also be reviewed (and the formulae to be applied) as part of the regular four yearly full review of the Members Allowances Scheme (to commence later this year).

### **5.0 Conclusions**

5.1 In making recommendations the Panel took into account the percentage criteria applied in the 2015 review for opposition group leaders, in particular:

- that for the Principal Opposition Group Leader to qualify for an allowance similar to a Cabinet Member, then there would need to be a group the size of 25% of the Council membership (this criteria was met)
- that a minimum group size for the Second Opposition Group Leader to qualify for an allowance had been considered in 2015, but had not been determined, as no second group had been formed
- comparative information from other authorities, including examples of a minimum group size
- the opportunity to review the decision of Council, along with the full Members' Allowances Scheme in 2019.

### **6.0 Recommendations to Blackpool Council**

6.1 That a minimum group size of 10% of the overall number of members of the Council be recommended as criteria for a Special Responsibility allowance for a Second Opposition Group Leader and that an allowance of £6,197 (the same as the Deputy Leader of the Principal Opposition Group) is recommended for the Leader of that Group, should that criteria be met.

- 6.2 That the criteria for determining allowances for Opposition Group Leaders, across a range of options, be considered as part of the overall review of the Members Allowances scheme, starting later this year and due to be considered by the Council in 2019.
- 6.3 That the Council places on record its thanks to Mr Peter Whitehead for his contribution to the Panel over the years.

Mr Tony Mozley, (Chairman for the meeting)  
Mrs Helen Hockenhull  
Mr Greg Molyneux