

Questionnaire for South Staffordshire Councillors August 2022 – Member Allowances

Please find below a few questions which we would be grateful for your answers on in relation to the level of Member's Allowances.

As you will be aware the level of Member Allowances are fixed by this Council every 4 years following a report from the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). The decision on the allowances is set by Council but having regard to the report from the IRP (and indeed to any recommendations made by it).

In order to inform the IRP's deliberations, it would be helpful for you to answer the following questions. Please return the completed questionnaire by Friday 2 September 2022 to a.long@sstaffs.gov.uk

Name:	Rita Heseltine
1.	<p>Do you think that the current scheme should be changed? if so, how?</p> <p>I do not think that the current scheme should be changed. Looking at it every 4 years is more than sufficient.</p>
2.	<p>Are you aware of any schemes operated by comparable authorities that you would like the IRP to look at – if so which ones?</p>
3.	<p>Are there any other comments that you would like the IRP to take into account?</p> <p>It would be not only imprudent but insulting to increase the scheme at this time, in particular, when so many residents/families are struggling financially with the cost of living and rises in the cost of fuel. As I have stated on previous occasions, I really fail to see what some Councillors do to spend their allowance. I know that in the past it has been claimed that the allowance should cover road tax, insurance and fuel costs when travelling to the Council – but it is not the function of this Council to supplement tax and insurance which would have to be paid for anyway. Due to the circumstances of the lockdowns during the pandemic the vast majority of meetings have had to be held virtually via Teams so any travel costs have been almost non-existent.</p> <p>I feel strongly that the role of Councillor should not be viewed merely as a second job to earn extra income.</p>

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1.	<p>Do you think that the current scheme should be changed? if so, how?</p> <p>I think that allowance need to be increased especially as the cost of living, petrol & travelling costs have all increased. I think it so important to try and encourage new people to join us and this would be a good incentive. People in the community have no idea just how many voluntary hours are given to supporting our wonderful Council for their benefit.</p>
2.	<p>Are you aware of any schemes operated by comparable authorities that you would like the IRP to look at – if so which ones?</p>
3.	<p>Are there any other comments that you would like the IRP to take into account?</p> <p>This Council has earned very good reputation though hard work and loyalty. This needs to be rewarded.</p>

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Name:	Michael Lawrence
1.	Do you think that the current scheme should be changed? if so, how? NO.
2.	Are you aware of any schemes operated by comparable authorities that you would like the IRP to look at – if so which ones? NO
3.	Are there any other comments that you would like the IRP to take into account? NO

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Name:	Warren Fisher
1.	<p>Do you think that the current scheme should be changed? if so, how?</p> <p>Yes, the portion paid directly to Members should be massively reduced, with the rest making up a Member Grant Fund, that residents/groups can apply to for ward improvements.</p> <p>The current scheme, I feel has become a private pension club, with some Members who become reliant on it for a living (which is not the purpose of the allowance). This is a danger to democracy as once a Member is reliant on the funds, they are less likely to speak out and operate independently, for fear of losing their party selection in a following election, and therefore can be easily controlled/manipulated.</p> <p>Having a much reduced allowance, will reduce the risk of dependency by Members, and will see more funds being directed locally to small causes and projects.</p>
2.	<p>Are you aware of any schemes operated by comparable authorities that you would like the IRP to look at – if so which ones?</p> <p>I'm not aware, but would appreciate some comparisons, and examples of the different scheme options.</p>
3.	<p>Are there any other comments that you would like the IRP to take into account?</p> <p>Please take into account, the ability of Members to operate more digitally, reducing the cost of carrying out our duties. More residents are now able to tap into other services directly, and in most part, a Member is just sign posting to other organisations/staff, which in my view, doesn't equate to nearly £6k/year in basic allowance.</p> <p>I also feel a comparable reduction to Chairmans allowances would also recognise the efficiency of digital transformation and reduced burden on Members in those roles.</p> <p>For example, I would like to see a policy that makes 40% of all allowances, into individual 'Member Grant Funds', that we can distribute locally through application as the Member sees fit, with the remaining 60% as a traditional Member Allowance as a suitable starting point.</p>

	Over time this could be further reduced to 50/50.
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