

Audit and Governance Committee

3 August 2026

Recruitment to the Independent Remuneration Panel

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr N Ireland, Leader, Climate, Performance, Communications and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s): N/a

Senior Leadership Team:

J Mair - Director, Assurance and Governance

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Statutory Authority: Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England)

Regulations 2003

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 In accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, Dorset Council is required to maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel (the panel), made up of at least three persons independent to the council, who review and make recommendations to Full Council in respect of the Scheme of Members' Allowances.
- 1.2 Following the resignation of the chair of the panel, there are two panel members remaining, and therefore the council needs to consider the appointment of a new independent person to the panel and to consider the arrangements for how the panel is chaired moving forward. To improve resilience, it is recommended that a specialist chair be sought and that in addition, one further panel member be recruited, to increase the total panel membership to four.
- 1.3 The Scheme of Delegation in the Constitution, sets out that the Audit and Governance Committee must determine procedures associated with the

appointment of any independent remuneration panel.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That support be sought from South West Councils to fulfil the role of chair of the panel;
- 2.2 That an open recruitment exercise be carried out to appoint one further panel member to the Independent Remuneration Panel.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 To ensure that Dorset Council maintains an Independent Remuneration Panel in accordance with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and in line with the requirements of the Scheme of Delegation for the Audit and Governance Committee, as set out in the Constitution.
- 3.2 Accessing support available from South West Councils to chair meetings of the panel will provide relevant expertise and regional knowledge, which will be invaluable to the effective working of the panel. Appointing an additional panel member, to increase the panel size to four members, will provide improved resilience.

4. The report

- 4.1 To ensure transparency and fairness, councils do not set their councillor allowances schemes in isolation and are required by law to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel. The Independent Remuneration Panel is responsible for monitoring the Members' Allowances Scheme and will make recommendations to the council regarding setting or amending the scheme. Full Council must have regard to the recommendations of the panel when setting or amending a scheme of allowances. The [current Dorset Council Scheme of Members' Allowances](#) is available on the council's website.
- 4.2 The Independent Remuneration Panel makes recommendations to the council regarding the level of a basic allowance available to all members, any special responsibility allowances payable, travel and subsistence rates, arrangements for a carers' allowance, allowances for co-opted and independent members and the mechanism for adjusting allowances on an annual basis and backdating of allowances where amended. It also acts as the Parish Remuneration Panel for all parish and town councils within the Dorset Council area, making recommendations to these councils about the levels of allowances available to parish and town council members, if their council chooses to pay allowances.
- 4.3 The Independent Remuneration Panel has previously been comprised of three independent persons, with one panel member taking on the role of chair.

Following the resignation of the panel chair, the council needs to recruit at least one person to join the panel, and to consider the arrangements for chairing meetings in the future.

- 4.4 The proposal is to seek support available from South West Councils, to provide the chairing role for the panel, which will provide expertise and regional knowledge, including from their involvement with a number of other panels across the region.
- 4.5 In addition, it is proposed that one further panel member be sought, to increase the membership of the panel to four persons. This will provide improved resilience. It is proposed that an open recruitment exercise is undertaken, in line with the council's processes and tailored to reflect the independent nature of the position. Due to the nature of the position, there are restrictions on a person's ability to be a member of an independent remuneration panel, as set out in the regulations.

5. **Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 The following alternative options were considered:

- a) Recruit one new panel member through an open recruitment exercise, to retain the panel membership at three members, and appoint a chair from the membership

- b) Recruit two new panel members through an open recruitment exercise, to increase the panel membership to four members, and appoint a chair from the membership

- c) Recruit one or two new panel members through an open recruitment exercise and approach known people with previous local government experience to signpost them to the recruitment process.

6. **Legal considerations**

- 6.1 Under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, Dorset Council, is required to maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel, made up of at least three persons independent to the council. The regulations require that the panel undertakes a fundamental review and makes recommendations to Full Council at least every four years, on the type and levels of allowances available within the Scheme of Members' Allowances, and the mechanism used to update any allowances made available. The last fundamental review took place in 2025, with the next review scheduled for 2028/29. In addition, there may be a requirement for ad-hoc reviews in between, to consider any governance changes and it is also proposed that the panel be invited to meet on an annual basis to undertake a quick 'check-in' review of the scheme of allowances.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There is no additional cost to the council from the recommendations made. The involvement of South West Councils would form part of their service provided to member organisations. Panel members can claim £250 per review undertaken, but with one additional panel member proposed, this does not incur any additional cost to the panel's previous arrangement.

8. Natural environment, climate and ecology implications

- 8.1 None directly applicable.

9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 None directly applicable.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 None.

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

12. Equalities

- 12.1 The recruitment and selection process for the additional panel member will be in accordance with Dorset Council's recruitment policy and will reflect the independent nature of the role and the restrictions in place, as set out in the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 None

14. Background papers

- 14.1 [The Local Authorities \(Members' Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2003](#)
14.2 [Members' Allowances Scheme 2026 to 2027 - Dorset Council](#)

15. Report sign-off

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)