

LEADER'S POLICY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Tuesday, 22nd October, 2024

Present: Councillors Munsif Dad BEM JP (in the Chair), Councillors Zak Khan and Kath Pratt

Apologies Councillors Noordad Aziz and Kimberley Whitehead

16 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Noordad Aziz and Kimberley Whitehead.

17 Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday, 29th July 2024 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

Agreed - **That the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.**

18 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

19 Review of Members Allowances

Jane Ellis, Executive Director Legal and Democratic Services, introduced a report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) on members allowances. The Board was informed that the IRP had met on 12th September 2024 and had been invited to consider and make recommendations on the following matters:

- a) whether the Council should again have the capacity to increase allowances by reference to inflation as previously (subject to the proviso that this could only be done on four occasions without reference to the Panel); and
- b) whether the Special Responsibility Allowance for Vice-Chairs of overview and scrutiny committees was too high with regard to the workload involved and, if the Panel considered that it was, what the appropriate level of allowance should be; and
- c) whether a Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid in recognition of the "Member Champion" role and, if the Panel considered that it should, what the appropriate level of allowance should be and whether a limit should be placed upon the number of such allowances payable.

The IRP's recommendations were as follows:

- (1) Not to apply an inflationary index to Basic Allowance and SRAs for 2024/25, but to review this question again in time to make recommendations for adoption in the Members Allowances Scheme 2025/26. *(NB. When making any recommendation*

for 2024/25, or subsequent years, the Panel will have regard to the desirability of the level of inflation not being significantly out of step with the staff pay award).

- (2) That the overview and scrutiny committees' Vice-Chair's SRA should be abolished, but if the Council are minded to retain the allowance it should reduce the amount to ensure that it more closely reflects the ratio of Chairs to Vice-Chairs allowance applicable to other Committees (ie. in the range 33% to 50%).
- (3) To agree, in principle, to an allowance of £250 being set for each Member Champion, but to defer making a final recommendation pending receipt of further information about the role and the lines of accountability.

The Board was asked to consider whether it wished to submit any formal proposals to the Council in connection with the matters considered by the Panel. Ms Ellis reminded members that, if any changes to the Members Allowances Scheme were proposed, the Council must have regard to the Panel's recommendations when making a decision, but would not be bound by them.

Councillor Dad indicated that he was prepared to accept the IRP's recommendations and invited further comments. Councillor Khan commented as follows:

- The provision of an allowance to Member Champions (Recommendation 3) reflected their additional responsibilities, for example, the need to attend particular meetings and events.
- Regarding the Vice-Chairs of overview and scrutiny committees (Recommendation 2), he suggested not abolishing the allowance but reducing it to a similar proportion of the Chair's allowance that was applicable to other committees. He noted that there had been some occasions recently when the Vice-Chair had been required to take the chair.
- An annual inflationary increase to members allowance (Recommendation 1) would better reflect the growing professionalisation of the councillor role. A percentage increase in line with the staff pay award would be reasonable and would reflect the time commitment of councillors and, in some cases, loss of income from work.
- Any changes arising from the Panel's report should implemented with effect from the start of the financial year 2025/26.

Councillor Dad supported the above rationale.

On the matter of Vice-Chairs' allowances Julian Joinson, Member Services Manager, reported that the proportion of the Chair's allowance varied for 33% (Planning Committee) to 50% (Licensing Committee). In the latter case, the Vice-Chair had a role in chairing Licensing hearings. Councillor Dad observed that 33% of the Chair's allowance for an overview and scrutiny committee would be in the region of £2k. Officers undertook to provide the detailed figures to members of the Board after the meeting.

Agreed

- **To request the Executive Director Legal and Democratic Services to provide a report to Council proposing the following changes to the Members Allowances Scheme with effect from 1st April 2025:**

- (a) An allowance of £250 being set for each Member Champion, up to a maximum of four such persons;
- (b) The allowance for Vice-Chairs of overview and scrutiny committees being reduced to a proportion of the Chair's allowance in line with the other committees, subject to consultation with the Leader of the Council and Leader of the Opposition on the final figure to be put forward;
- (c) In support of the continuing professionalisation of the councillor role, to approve the application of an annual inflationary index (for a four year period) to basic and special responsibility allowances in line with the annual staff pay award.

20 Replacement Mayor's Car

Members considered a report of the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) on a replacement Mayor's car.

The current budget provision for the lease of the Mayor's car was £4,600.00 per annum.

The lease cost for the current vehicle was £5,825.81 per annum. That lease was due to expire on 16th March 2025 and the Council, therefore, needed to start looking for a replacement vehicle given possible lengthy order periods. The current vehicle was over 3 years old, with the Council taking delivery of the same in March 2021.

Quotes had been sought for a selection of vehicles that seemed appropriate in terms of:

- dignity / prestige
- ability to comfortably carry the mayor and guest(s) whilst robed, wearing hats etc
- green credentials, all being low emission hybrid or electric vehicles.

Make/model, list price and annual lease charges were set out in a Table, as shown below.

Make/Model	Cost (annual charge)	List Price of Car
Audi A6 saloon 50 TFSI e Quattro Sport 4dr S Tronic	£8,535.24	£58,765.00
BWM 5 series saloon 530e M Sport 4dr Auto	£8,188.32	£60,300.00
BMW i5 saloon eDrive40 M Sport 84kWh 4dr Auto	£8,478.96	£74,950.00
Hyundai Ioniq 6 Ultimate 77kWh 4dr Auto	£4,465.80	£51,185.00
Mercedes C Class saloon C300e AMG Line 4dr 9G-Tronic	£8,064.96	£52,684.99
Mercedes E Class Estate E300e AMG Line Advanced 4dr 9G-Tronic	£10,327.08	£70,215.00

Mercedes EQE saloon EQE300 Sport Edition 89kWh 4dr Auto	£7,783.00	£68,755.00
Tesla Model 3 saloon RWD 4dr Auto	£7,414.56	£41,235.00
Volkswagen saloon ID7 Match Pro 77kWh 5dr Auto	£5,484.12	£51,495.00
Lexus ES Saloon 300h	£8,518.92	£56,629.99

All quotes were for a lease of 4 years and with an annual mileage of 5,000.

Members attention was draw to the fact that the lease cost of a new vehicle was likely to exceed the current budgetary provision by some margin. This could be attributed to:

- the comparatively high cost of hybrid and electric vehicles; and
- car costs generally outstripping the inflationary increases made to the budget.

Previously when the Mayor's car had been replaced, the Leaders Board had agreed a shortlist of possible vehicles and then officers had arranged for the Mayor, mayor's attendant and a senior officer to inspect and test drive the same, prior to a final recommendation for purchase being made. It was suggested that this approach be taken again if members were minded to replace the current car.

The Leaders Board was invited to:

1. indicate whether it wished to replace the current vehicle or explore the cost of extending the current lease for another year or longer (provided the lease company would agree to this);
2. subject to 1 above, to consider the table of vehicles with costs and indicate any preferences for further investigation; and
3. note that the current budgetary provision for the mayor's car appeared to be inadequate and that officers proposed to submit a growth bid as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process to bring the budget into line with current vehicle lease costs.

In response to a question by Councillor Khan, Ms Ellis clarified that previously it had been possible to extend the car lease for a period of 6, 12 or 24 months, but this would be at the discretion of the car lease company. Members noted that there could be some savings on fuel usage, which could offset any increased vehicle leasing cost. The current vehicle was a petrol/electric hybrid. Fuel costs were low, as most journeys were within the range of the car's battery. A charging point had already been installed in the garage.

Councillor Dad suggested that officers investigate the extension of the current lease initially, before considering the lease of a new vehicle.

Members discussed their preferences for a new vehicle based on prestige and rear leg/head room. The following vehicles were identified for further consideration

- Audi A6 saloon 50 TFSI e Quattro Sport 4dr S Tronic
- Mercedes E Class Estate E300e AMG Line Advanced 4dr 9G-Tronic
- Mercedes EQE saloon EQE300 Sport Edition 89kWh 4dr Auto

Councillor Khan asked if any savings could be achieved by leasing a Tesla, as the Council had already acquired a number of these vehicles under the staff car lease scheme. However, Ms Ellis did not believe that this would be possible with the current car lease company.

Agreed

- (1) That officers be requested to look into an extension to the current lease, before considering the lease of a new vehicle;**
- (2) That in the even that no suitable arrangements can be made under (1) above, officers be requested give further consideration to leasing the following vehicles, including undertaking inspections and test drives:**
 - **Audi A6 saloon 50 TFSI e Quattro Sport 4dr S Tronic**
 - **Mercedes E Class Estate E300e AMG Line Advanced 4dr 9G-Tronic**
 - **Mercedes EQE saloon EQE300 Sport Edition 89kWh 4dr Auto**
- (3) To note that the current budgetary provision for the mayor's car appears to be inadequate and that officers propose to submit a growth bid as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process to bring the budget into line with current vehicle lease cost.**

21 Webcasting

The Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) reported that updated figures for a comprehensive webcasting system in the Council Chamber had not yet been obtained.

An alternative approach, which had recently been suggested, was to provide a minimalist solution, comprising freestanding desk-top microphones for use by the councillors and separate filming of the meeting on a suitable device (iPad or camera) from the public gallery. The video could then be uploaded to the Council's website on the day after the meeting.

This arrangement could be piloted at Council meetings then, if successful, rolled out to Cabinet meetings. Lancaster City Council were known to be piloting this type of arrangement and were keen to understand viewing figures before committing to any significant expenditure on a dedicated system. Viewing figures to date had been relatively low.

Councillor Khan expressed concern that filming via a portable camera or iPad would look unprofessional and might give a worse impression of the Council than not recording the meeting at all. He asked if the cost of installing a dedicated system could be spread over several years as a capital project. It was acknowledged that there would be additional staffing costs to provide a person to operate a camera/iPad.

Mr Joinson indicated that previously quotes had been obtain from 2 specialist contractors, Public-i and Auditel, who were known to support webcasting of local authority meetings. One firm had provided a desk-based quote without undertaking a site visit. Both quotes had included an element of capital for the purchase and installation of equipment in Year 1

and on-going revenue costs in the form of annual fees. The quotes were comparable and in the region of £120k for the first year, depending on which options were selected. It might be possible to obtain lower quotes by refining the specification to cater for more basic requirements only.

Agreed

- **To request the Member Services Manager to obtain updated quotes for a dedicated webcasting system and to look into the costs of providing a basic desk-top microphone only system with a member of staff on duty to film meetings via a camera or iPad.**

22 Boundary Review

The Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) provided a verbal update on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's scheduled boundary review in Hyndburn.

The Board was reminded that an All Member Briefing was due to take place on Thursday via MS Teams. The Member Services Manager would shortly send out a reminder to all councillors stressing the importance of attending.

The timetable would require the Council to determine its view on the electoral cycle and the numbers of councillors per ward by February/March 2025. If any 2 member wards were to be retained the Council would need to switch to all out elections. However, election by thirds could be retained if the Council moved to all 3 member wards.

It might be useful to establish a cross-party working group to consider the preferred arrangements, prior to submitting a report to the Council for a decision. Alternatively, political parties could submit their own individual views. Councillor Dad commented that he had already approached Councillor Khan about forming a working group.

Councillor Khan commented that the 3 member wards appeared to be the more sensible option, but that ward boundaries could be an issue. 3 member wards would be simpler for the public to understand. It was likely that the Conservative group would wish to retain election by thirds. Councillor Judith Addison would coordinate the Conservative group's response on this matter. Councillor Dad indicated that the Labour group had not yet discussed the issue, pending the All Member Briefing. He should be in a position to provide more information after the briefing.

Ms Ellis added that a written submission would be required containing the Council's view. Officers would commence working on the figures to support the Council's case and would bring these to a further meeting of the Board around the Christmas period.

Agreed

- **To note the update on the Boundary Review in Hyndburn.**

23 Mayor's Cadet

Councillors considered a verbal update of the Member Services Manager on the possible appointment of a Mayor's Cadet.

At its last meeting the Board had endorsed the proposals to establish a Mayoral Cadet role with effect from 2025/26, and had authorised officers to undertake the necessary consultations with the various cadet organisations.

An e-mail had been sent to the Sea, Air and Army Cadets, enclosing a copy of the draft Protocol and the application/consent form. To date only one reply had been received on behalf of the Sea Cadets, which had been positive. Efforts would be made to chase up the outstanding replies.

Councillor Khan indicated that he was aware that the Air Cadets were still in support of this scheme. He undertook contact Hilary Austin, Chair of Accrington RAFAC for a response. He commented that the Army Cadets were sometimes difficult to contact and suggested that the Member Services Manager get in touch with Councillor Danny Cassidy who could act as an intermediary.

Agreed - **To note the update on the appointment of a Mayor's Cadet.**

24 Town Twinning

The Member Services Manager provided a verbal update on the Town Twinning proposals between Accrington and Khust, in Ukraine.

A report had been considered by the Council in September 2024 and approval had been given to:

- Confirm the Council's support for the twinning relationship between Accrington and Khust;
- Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Mayor of Khust; and
- Establish a working group to take forward the project.

The Member Services Manager undertook to draft a letter for the Leader shortly. Councillor Dad reported that Councillor Whitehead would take the lead on the working group.

Agreed - **To note the update on the town twinning proposals.**

25 Poling Station Review

Members considered a report of the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) on the outcome of the recent review of polling stations. A schedule was provided, which set out the recommendations for each polling district.

There were only minor changes to the list of polling stations. It was acknowledged that a small number of polling stations still had no disabled access, but no complaints had been received about those locations. Presiding officers usually arranged for the ballot box to be taken outside to any voter with mobility issues.

The 2 changes proposed were as set out below:

Polling district	Current location	Suggested new location
ZD	Mobile unit at St Mary's School	St Mary's School
IA	Oswaldtwistle Civic Theatre	Rhyddings Methodist School

St Mary's School had been able to reorganised their usage of space in the main building to allow public access to one room for use as a polling station. An alternative mobile site had been considered on Warwick Avenue, but use of the school premises was more cost effective.

In the case of the Mobile Unit at Oswaldtwistle Civic Theatre, 2 churches had been considered. Rhyddings Methodist Church was the more cost effective and had a car park and better disabled access. The proposed new polling station was still within the polling district.

Councillor Khan queried whether Knuzden St Oswald's CE School had been considered instead of Knuzden St Oswald's Church, which had a difficult disabled access. Ms Ellis did not have information to hand about why this had not been considered. It might be that the school was not in a position to offer a separate room. Under those circumstances the Council would be reluctant to use its powers to compel the school to make a room available, as this would effectively cause the whole school to be closed.

Agreed **To note the report on the polling station review.**

26 Other Business

Ms Ellis indicated that she intended to review the Civic Protocol prior to the next meeting.

There were no other items of business raised.

27 Date and Time of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed