

# Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

To: Corporate, Policy and Resources Committee

Councillors Allowances

Date 20/10/15

For Decision

## 1.0 Reporting to Committee

<b>Linkage to Corporate Plan</b>	
<b>Strategic Priority</b>	Compliance with DoE Regulation
<b>Objective</b>	Councillors Allowances
<b>Lead Officer</b>	David Wright
<b>Cost: (If applicable)</b>	

### 1.1 Background

At a recent Planning Committee members enquired about the possibility of an allocation of Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) to reflect the level of engagement and workload of that committee.

### 1.2 Detail

The previous Environment Minister appointed an Independent Remuneration Panel in May 2013 to conduct a review of all councillors' allowances. The Panel when making its recommendations on the new rates was asked to take into consideration the full range of new duties that councillors were to undertake from 2015/2016; this included the new planning responsibilities. The Report of the Panel, dated 1 November 2013, recommended that the basic allowance from 1 April 2015 should be increased considerably to take account of the new duties for all councillors.

As a result of this recommendation the current Minister directed that the basic allowance was increased from £10,051 in 2014/2015 to £14,200 from 1 April 2015, and in addition increased the SRA limits, again to take into account the new responsibilities for councillors. For our council's population of approximately 141,699 this meant an increase from £63,482 in 2014/15 to £70,000 in 2015/16.

It is a matter for each council to identify the responsibilities and the level of SRA to be awarded to councillors within this maximum within set limits. The main advantage of each council deciding

how to allocate SRA is that it gives councils flexibility to remunerate responsibilities which accord with particular priorities

### 1.3 Implications

Set out in the table below is the option presented to Council in March whereby the Planning Committee members would all receive an allocation of SRA. Note that this option did not include vice chairs but that our current scheme of allowances includes vice chairs and the figures included have been updated to reflect the current allocations. This in turn means that to now allocate SRA to the individual members of Planning Committee the total number of recipients would potentially be 25 which is in excess of the regulatory limit of 50% (20). In the current year 2 members of the Planning Committee currently receive SRA by way of another appointment therefore since no member can receive more than one allocation by way of SRA the number in this year who would receive SRA would be 23.

	Per Member	Total
Mayor	7,500	7,500
Deputy Mayor	4,000	4,000
Partnership Panel Representative	1,000	1,000
Committee Chair (x4)	3,000	12,000
Audit Committee Chair	750	750
Planning Committee (14)	1,000	14,000
Committee Vice Chair (x4)	350	1,400
Audit Committee Vice Chair	150	150
<b>Total Allowances</b>		<b>£40,880</b>

It is recognised that there may be exceptional circumstances where it may be appropriate to apply SRA to more than half of the members of a particular council and the regulations allow for councils to apply, in those circumstances, to the Department for approval to do so. There is no ceiling on the amount over the 50% limit that can be considered but what is important is to show the exceptional nature of the circumstances that apply. The council would have to highlight the exceptional nature of the further posts to be considered. Guidance advises that SRA should only be paid to those councillors who have significant additional responsibilities, over and above the generally accepted duties of a councillor.

There were a number of successful applications in the past before the Reform of Local Government was in place and before the basic allowance and the SRA limits were increased to take account of the new responsibilities and transferred functions. There have been no applications for an increase in the maximum limit of 50% councillors receiving SRA since 1 April 2015.

### 1.4 Financial Impact

When setting the rates estimates for the current year a budget of £70,000 was allocated to SRA. In March when adopting the scheme of allowances Council decided not to allocate all of the

available budget therefore Council does have the financial capacity to allocate further SRA should it so decide.

## **1.5 Recommendation**

It is recommended that Council decides whether or not to expand the scheme of allowances to include all members of the Planning Committee.