

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
REPORT**

SUBJECT:	Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Report 2024/25 – arrangements for payments to co-opted members.
MEETING:	Democratic Services Committee
DATE:	15th April 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To approve the method of remunerating co-opted members to committees on the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Democratic Services Committee approve the decision to retain the full/half day rate of remuneration for co-opted members.

3. REASONS:

- 3.1 At the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on the 22nd January 2024, the committee received the draft version of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales report for 2024/25 which sets out the level of remuneration councillors are to receive.
- 3.2 The final version of the IRPW report was published and circulated by email to all councillors for information on the 29th February 2024.
- 3.3 Determination 5 of the report proposes potential changes to the way remuneration is calculated for co-opted members to the County Council. Previously, co-opted members have been able to claim their remuneration based on half day (upto four hours) or full day (over four hours) rates as set out in the report. The 2024 report, adds in the option to remunerate co-opted members on an hourly basis and leaves the decision on which system to use to each local authority to determine.
- 3.4 Co-opted members have been consulted on the proposals and those that responded confirmed that retaining the current half/full day rate is the preferred method. The main benefit being that the rate allows co-opted members to work in a way that best suits their need to prepare for and participate in council meetings with minimum additional administration attached to the claims process.
- 3.5 Claims from co-opted members are submitted to democratic services with the date and rate of pay relating to the work they are carrying out along with any expenses claims relating to the role. The claims are checked and authorised before forwarding to payroll for payment.

3.6 Pros and cons of each method is highlighted below

Hourly Rate:

Pros

- Greater transparency between remuneration received and hours worked
- Procedures remain in line with IRPW requirements

Cons

- Unclear what, if any, cost savings the change to an hourly rate system could produce
- Greater administration burden and associated costs with an hourly rate system for co-opted members, democratic services and payroll
- A need to predetermine suitable time allowed for meeting preparation to ensure that claims remain acceptable which reduces the flexibility for co-opted members to properly prepare for meetings.
- Unnecessary work to claim for single hour work multiple times of a period where preparation and pre meetings are dispersed and still leaves ambiguity for any work undertaken that is less than one hour.

Half/Full Day Rate

Pros

- Greater flexibility for co-opted members to claim accumulated work relating to a particular meeting in a manner that suits them rather lots of itemised bits of work that equate to the same amount. For example, single claims for meeting preparation, pre meetings and the time spent within the meeting itself
- Procedures remain in line with the IRPW requirements
- Less administration to process
- Clarity of budget planning retaining the current system

Cons

- Potential less transparency relating to hours worked and remuneration received

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 4.1 Retaining the current system of half/full day rate allows for greater clarity of budget implications as the system has already been adopted over previous years. Calculating hourly rate costs are difficult due to the varying size of agenda and details of report and length of council meetings and provide less certainty of long term budget implications. Hourly rate claims will also incur additional costs in checking and processing more detailed claims in addition to the unknown costs of changing the system.

5. CONSULTATION:

Co-opted Members
Monitoring Officer

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

7. **AUTHOR:** John Pearson, Local Democracy Manager
johnpearson@monmouthshire.gov.uk