

Independent Remuneration Panel

Request for Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)

Vice Chair, Strategic Planning Committee

Background

- 1 The Strategic Planning Committee holds a central role in overseeing the development and implementation of the Council's planning policy framework, including the preparation and delivery of the Local Plan and other key documents. The Committee's remit now encompasses a wider range of strategic planning functions, including infrastructure delivery planning, housing land allocations, and responses to changes in the national planning framework. The scale and complexity of these matters has placed greater demands on the Chair and, increasingly, on the Vice-Chair, who is required to provide active support and leadership to ensure the efficient discharge of the Committee's responsibilities. This is a highly technical, resource-intensive, and time-critical process that has placed a significant additional workload on both Members and Officers, particularly those in leadership roles within the Committee.
- 2 In practice, the Vice-Chair undertakes a substantial share of preparatory work, including reviewing extensive agenda papers, attending officer briefings, and leading member workshops or public consultation sessions. The role also requires regular deputising for the Chair, chairing meetings, and representing the Committee in cross-committee and external liaison where planning, housing, and infrastructure issues intersect. These activities go beyond what might reasonably be expected of an ordinary committee member or a purely ceremonial deputy.
- 3 The Panel considered comparative evidence from other authorities, including North Yorkshire, Somerset, Westminster, Havering, Lewisham, South Tyneside and Cheshire East. Many other councils have planning bodies called "Planning Committee", "Development Management Committee", "Strategic Planning Committee", or different area planning committees. where Vice-Chairs of Strategic Planning or equivalent committees receive a Special Responsibility Allowance in recognition of similar workload demands.

Current Position

- 4 At present, no Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) is paid to the Vice Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee. However, the level of activity, complexity, and public interest associated with the Local Plan process has resulted in the Vice Chair undertaking responsibilities well beyond those of an ordinary committee member. These include:
 - Supporting the Chair in managing an increased schedule of meetings, workshops, and briefings;
 - Deputising for the Chair as required, ensuring continuity of leadership;
 - Contributing to agenda planning and policy discussions with Officers and external stakeholders;

- Representing the Committee in member briefings, site visits, and public engagement activities.

Rationale for Award

- 5 The enhanced workload and leadership role of the Vice Chair warrant formal recognition through a Special Responsibility Allowance. This position now requires significant time commitment, subject-matter expertise, and active engagement in strategic decision-making processes that directly influence the Council's planning and growth agenda.
- 6 There is also a clear precedent within the Council's allowance structure: the Vice Chair of the Licensing and Enforcement Committee currently receives an SRA equivalent to 50% of the Chair's allowance, in recognition of comparable responsibilities in a regulatory and high-demand area. Applying the same principle to the Strategic Planning Committee would ensure consistency, fairness, and alignment with existing practice.

Recommendation

- 7 That the Independent Remuneration Panel recommends the allocation of a Special Responsibility Allowance to the Vice Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, in line with that set for the Vice Chair of Licensing and Enforcement, set at 50% of the Chair's SRA (£1,810.42), in recognition of the increased workload and the leadership contribution required, particularly during the preparation of the Local Plan and that the SRA is backdated to 1 June 2025.