

## Civic Review

Leader of the Council

Date: 14 September 2023  
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Key Decision? **YES/NO (delete as appropriate)**  
Local Ward Members If any Wards are particularly affected insert the name of the Ward Members and their Ward. Ensure that the Ward Members have been consulted.



## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Civic Function was last reviewed in 2015 by the then Strategic (Overview & Scrutiny Committee) via a Member Task Group and as a result, Council approved a number of changes, including the introduction on an event suitability scoring matrix to standardise the number of functions attended.
- 1.2 The Civic Duties allowance was also reduced due to the fewer events attended following the introduction of the matrix and the Chair's charity event ceased.
- 1.3 In June 2022, the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) made recommendations regarding allowances and, that clarity be provided to the Civic Allowance that the Council specify how the Civic Allowance may be spent. In particular, it felt it would be useful if it was laid out what proportion of the Civic Allowance may be spent on personal items.
- 1.4 Following the pandemic but also passage of time, events have changed and evolved and it would be useful to revisit the matrix to consider if it still fit for purpose or requires amending.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Overview & Scrutiny consider the matrix and the types of event invitations the Chair receives and recommend amendments if required;
- 2.2 That the Committee give views and recommend to Council, if required, that the Civic Allowance be proportioned into areas of spend.

### 3. Background

#### Matrix

- 3.1 The Civic function was reviewed by the Strategic O&S committee through a Member Task Group in June 2015 following feedback from a public consultation on use of Council resources where feedback had been received on best value concerns of the Chairman's duties. The task group consisted of ex Councillors Tittley (who Chaired), E. Little as well as Councillor Woodward (during a previous term) and Councillor Powell.
- 3.2 The Task Group heard from previous Chairs, the then Civic Officer and analysed data including the total events attended over three years and the budget used. It became apparent that these numbers greatly differed which incurred a wide variance in cost. When investigated further, it was noted that

the current process was for invitations to be accepted at the discretion of the Chairs themselves without a requirement to consider what added value it would give to the District Council or its Strategic priorities. It was acknowledged that guidance was given to Chairs by the then Civic Officer but still the decision lay with the individual Chair. It was noted that this inconsistency year to year led to high fluctuations in the budget and an inability to forward plan Officer resources as the Civic function was not the only role that Officer had (as is the same for the current Civic Officer).

- 3.3 To help standardise the number of events attended by Chairs (or Vice- Chairs in his/her absence) and ensure they added value to the Council and District of a whole, the Task Group has devised a scoring matrix to aid in the decision on what invitations should be accepted. This matrix has been based on best practice guidance from the National Association of Civic Officers (NACO) where it states that “a measure of the effectiveness of the Mayoralty (Chairmanship) in undertaking quality engagements is maintained.” The matrix can be found within the task group report at **Appendix A**. As an aid, a list of invitations accepted and declined from the last year’s Chair is attached at **Appendix B**.
- 3.4 At the time of the task group, it was felt that the Civic allowance and therefore public money should not be used as a fundraising source however since the introduction of the Matrix, the types of invitations received have changed with more charity and community group event requests. This could be due to the creation of more charities and groups during and following the pandemic or because fundraising is more difficult for these organisations because of the cost of living crisis or indeed a combination of both.
- 3.5 Although some invitations are not in the LDC area, the charities/groups involved do cover the district. An example of this are Civic charity events hosted by Staffordshire County Council. There could be an argument that in these circumstances, invitations should be accepted as it helps build relations with these groups.
- 3.6 Where there is no clear yes or no for the Civic Officer to accept, approval is sought by the Leader or Chief Executive. This slows the process and may not be considered the best use of such senior resources. To speed up acceptances and organisation of events, it may be useful to delegate this task to other Officers eg the Governance Manager (Monitoring Officer) or indeed consider its need at all and allow the Civic Officer to decide.

#### Views requested

- Views are sought to the continued suitability of event acceptance matrix and whether amendments are required including to the approval process where it cannot be clearly applied.
- Views are requested as to whether invitations to charity events outside the district where the charity works in the LDC area should be added to the list of matrix caveats.

#### **Civic Allowances**

- 3.7 The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) met in 2022 to conduct a review of allowances to Members and recommend changes to Council. Council decided in June 2022 at their meeting not to implement the recommendations (except to increase the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair and Vice-Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee and task group chairs in recognition of the change in function).

- 3.8 As part of the review the IRP were asked to consider the Civic Allowances for the Chair and Vice-Chair of Council as although not a requirement under legislation relevant for IRPs, they are the best independent body to give a view. During their investigations, they interviewed various Councillors and Officers to gather data and evidence.
- 3.9 The Civic Allowance is designed to meet out of pocket expenses that arise during the course of their duties including purchases and donations at events and church services, appropriate clothing including for consorts, cost of tickets to events such as dinners or entertainments organised by other organisations
- 3.10 They recommended an increase in the allowances for the Chair and Vice-Chair (which was again was not approved by Council) but also that the allowances be amalgamated into one budget. This would allow a Vice-Chair to claim more if extenuating circumstances meant they were required to attend more events than usual eg illness of a Chair. This was not agreed at Council as it was felt the allowances could always be adjusted if these rare circumstances required it. It would be useful to ask the view of Overview & Scrutiny as to whether this is still the opinion.
- 3.11 The IPR also recommended that clarity be sought on how the Civic Allowance could be spent and in particular, whether only a portion should be used for personal items. Currently there is no policy that states how much of the Civic Allowance can be drawn on for personal items. It should be noted that the allowance is open to public scrutiny and Freedom of Information requests can and have been received for information on previous Chair's spend.

#### Views requested

- Views are sought on whether the Chair's and Vice-Chair's Civic Allowances should be amalgamated or remain separated as current.
- Views are requested as to whether the Civic Allowance should be proportioned with limits on what can be spent on personal items such as clothing.

<b>Alternative Options</b>	1. To keep the matrix and allowance scheme as it is.																																
<b>Consultation</b>	1. The views of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee are requested before consulting further.																																
<b>Financial Implications</b>	<p>1. There are no financial implications directly from this report. The level of allowances can only be set by full Council and after consultation with the IRP.</p> <p>2. The Approved Budgets (plus a projection for 2027/28) for the Chairman and Vice Chairman's allowances are:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2"></th> <th rowspan="2">Budget 2023/24 £</th> <th colspan="4">Budget - 3 year period</th> <th rowspan="2">Projection 2027/28 £</th> </tr> <tr> <th>2024/25 £</th> <th>2025/26 £</th> <th>2026/27 £</th> <th>Total £</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Chair's Allowance</td> <td>£2,120</td> <td>£2,160</td> <td>£2,200</td> <td>£2,240</td> <td>£6,600</td> <td>£2,280</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vice Chair's Allowance</td> <td>£1,070</td> <td>£1,090</td> <td>£1,110</td> <td>£1,130</td> <td>£3,330</td> <td>£1,150</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>£3,190</b></td> <td><b>£3,250</b></td> <td><b>£3,310</b></td> <td><b>£3,370</b></td> <td><b>£9,930</b></td> <td><b>£3,430</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>3. The Civic Officer monitors the use of the Civic allowances and advises on spend and commitments.</p>		Budget 2023/24 £	Budget - 3 year period				Projection 2027/28 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	Total £	Chair's Allowance	£2,120	£2,160	£2,200	£2,240	£6,600	£2,280	Vice Chair's Allowance	£1,070	£1,090	£1,110	£1,130	£3,330	£1,150	<b>Total</b>	<b>£3,190</b>	<b>£3,250</b>	<b>£3,310</b>	<b>£3,370</b>	<b>£9,930</b>	<b>£3,430</b>
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Approved by Section 151 Officer	Yes																																

Legal Implications	1. The legal requirements of the IRP have been undertaken. There is no requirement for them to comment of the use of the Civic Allowance as it is for expenses however they have as they are a usual independent group that represent residents views.
Approved by Monitoring Officer	Yes

Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	1. Making the Civic process as efficient as possible would contribute to being a good council.
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Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	1. None in this report
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EIA logged by Equalities Officer	Equalities Officer confirmed not required.
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Crime & Safety Issues	1. None
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Data assessment	1. The Social Progress Index could help prioritise the types of events accepted, eg a charity event helping to decrease fuel poverty or domestic abuse in the Fazeley ward (currently both ranked as weak performance)
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Environmental Impact (including Climate Change and Biodiversity).	<p>1. The reduction of events attended especially outside the District and the now use of an electric vehicle by the Chair has reduced environmental impacts.</p> <p>2. Personal items such as clothing has historically been as such that it is kept and used well by Chair's, Vice-Chair's and their consorts. Guidance can be given to them to ensure sustainable items are purchased instead of "fast fashion" and donated if no longer required.</p>
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GDPR / Privacy Impact Assessment	None
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	Risk Description & Risk Owner	Original Score (RYG)	How We Manage It	Current Score (RYG)
A	All of the Civic Allowance is used on personal items – reputation risk	Yellow.	Introduction of a policy to proportion the allowance	Green.
B	An inefficient matrix	Yellow	Ensuring a matrix fit for purpose allows the Civic Officer to be consistent in their work year on year	Green
C				
D				
E				

	<b>Background documents</b>
	<b>Relevant web links</b>

Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Final Task group report 9 September 2015  
[democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/ceListDocuments.aspx?MeetingId=1220&DF=09%2f09%2f2015](http://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/ceListDocuments.aspx?MeetingId=1220&DF=09%2f09%2f2015)

Any links for background information which may be useful to understand the context of the report