

OPPOSITION GROUP LEADER ALLOWANCE

BACKGROUND: Currently, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group receives an allowance of £12,594 which almost doubles their basic allowance of £13,058.

The Leader of the Labour Group and Leader of the Independent Group receive no additional allowance.

There is no formal role of 'Leader of the Opposition' and therefore the Lib Dem Group Leader is equal in status to the Leader of the Independent Group and Leader of Labour Group, despite the disparity in allowance.

All group leaders attend opposition briefings equally. The Leader of the Liberal Democrat group is not required to work over-and-above the other group Leaders, for example did not introduce an alternative budget this year and had equal time along with the other opposition group Leader's to receive officer briefings and ultimately read a budget response.

OUR CONCLUSION: The current system where the Lib Dem Leader receives almost double their basic allowance whilst other group leaders receive no additional allowance cannot be reasonable or proportionate, when ensuring democratic duties are fairly discharged and members compensated appropriately.

RECOMMENDATION: We propose that a fair system to compensate all Group Leader's from discharging their duties would be to decrease the minimum threshold from 4 (which we understand it is currently) to 2 and review the actual amount paid in terms of actual workload it is compensating and not based on number of councillors in group.

OPPOSITION SPOKESPERSON ALLOWANCE

BACKGROUND: Currently, Lib Dem opposition spokespersons receive an allowance of £5652 each. Labour and Independent Group spokespersons receive no spokesperson allowance. This is despite them attending the same Select Committees/Groups and Decision Days and thus discharging the same level of responsibility and workload.

OUR CONCLUSION: The current system where the Lib Dem spokespersons receive an additional £5652 whilst other group spokespersons receive no additional allowance cannot be reasonable or proportionate, when ensuring democratic duties are fairly discharged and members compensated appropriately.

RECOMMENDATION: We propose that a fair system to compensate all Opposition Spokespeople from discharging their duties would be to decrease any minimum threshold of group members to review an allowance to two in a political group and base an allowance on the actual workload it is compensating for and not based on the number of councillors in the group.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- (1) The allowances given the cabinet members (Conservative Administration) are based on responsibility, not how many councillors belong to the group who supports the administration. However, the opposition group leader and spokesperson allowances are based on the number of councillors in each group. This is inconsistent, hence suggesting opposition allowances are based on the role they are compensating for.
- (2) We recognise that in a small group it is likely that the Leader of the Group is likely to also be a Spokesperson and thus would only claim one of the two allowances suggested above.
- (3) Mindful of the 'public purse', the Lib Dem Group Leader and Spokesperson allowances could be split 3-ways between the 3 current groups (or in any way recommended by the panel) to ensure fairness across groups and members but not increase the overall allowance budget.

Councillor Andy Tree
Leader – Independent Group
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