

Midlothian councillors agree 56% pay rise in under a minute

Midlothian councillors yesterday agreed a 56% pay increase for senior colleagues in just 45 seconds – moments before confirming council tax rises for residents.

A meeting of elected members took less than a minute to consider a report on salary increases for councillors which asked them to decide how high senior members pay should go.

And they agreed to award the maximum allowed – taking senior councillors from £24,016 a year to £37,548.

The rise follows a review of councillor payments which was carried out nationally by the Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee last year leading the Scottish Government to move 10 of the smaller councils up a grade.

But while the wages of council leaders and basic councillor payments are set nationally, local authorities were given the option of increasing senior councillors wages to up to 75% of the new council leader salary.

Last year in Midlothian the council's eight senior councillors – who include members of the administration cabinet and two opposition group leaders – received a salary which was equivalent to 67% of the nationally set council leader payment.

Tuesday's meeting of the full council saw council leader Councillor Kelly Parry, whose wages will rise over 40% from £35,563 to £50,063, propose senior members receive the maximum rise possible, taking their pay to 75% of her salary with the move seconded by Labour group leader Councillor Derek

Milligan.

No discussion about the report was held and it was unanimously approved without comment.

Councillors then moved to the next item – agreeing to raise fees and charges across public services before their main budget which saw the 10% council tax approved and reduced hours to leisure centres and swimming pools included in cuts.

The report into the salary increases said: “If council approve the changes in line with the existing % salary relative to the council leader for the civic head (Provost) and senior councillors, the budget impact per annum is £122,550.73.

“Any councillor may renounce the receipt of any remuneration payable

in terms of the regulations, in whole or in part, in which case the

remuneration is not payable by the council.”

The basic councillor wage for those in Midlothian’s band is based on 80% of the average public service workers pay and goes from £21,345 to £25, 982. It is set by the Scottish Government along with the payments to council leader and civic heads.

East Lothian Council which is also moved into Band B will also see its council leader receive the same £50, 068 salary but it is understood the increase for senior councillors has still to be agreed.

Councillor Kelly Parry said: “The recommendations aim to ensure the diversity and sustainability of councillors in Scotland by removing barriers to holding elected office and enabling wider representation.

“Midlothian has had the lowest paid councillors in Scotland, and the redistribution simply brings us in line with other

neighbouring councils.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter