



**The report of the Independent Remuneration Panel  
appointed to review the allowances paid to Councillors  
of the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 ("the 2003 Regulations"), as amended, require all local authorities to appoint an independent remuneration panel (IRP) to advise on the terms and conditions of their scheme of councillors' allowances.
- 1.1.2 The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk formally appointed the following persons to undertake this process and make recommendations on its future scheme.

David Dixon– Local resident and former Publishing Director of East Midlands Newspapers

Mike Press- Local resident and Governor at Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn

Mark Palmer – Director: Development & Governance, South East Employers (Chair)

- 1.1.3 Our terms of reference were in accordance with the requirements of the 2003 Regulations, together with "Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances" issued jointly by the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Inland Revenue (July 2003). Those requirements are to make recommendations to the Council as to:

- (a) the amount of basic allowance to be payable to all councillors;
  - (b) the level of allowances and whether allowances should be payable for:
    - (i) special responsibility allowances;
    - (ii) travelling and subsistence allowance;
    - (iii) dependants' carers' allowance;
    - (iv) parental leave and any
    - (v) co-optees' allowance.
- and the amount of such allowances.
- (c) whether payment of allowances may be backdated if the scheme is amended at any time to affect an allowance payable for the year in which the amendment is made.
  - (d) whether adjustments to the level of allowances may be determined according to an index and if so which index and how long that index should apply, subject to a maximum of four years before its application is reviewed.

## 2. CURRENT SCHEME

- 2.1.1 The last review of councillors' allowances was undertaken by the IRP in September 2021 and the current scheme came into effect from April 2021.
- 2.1.2 The Scheme currently provides that all councillors are each entitled to a total basic allowance of **£7,518 per annum**. In addition, some councillors receive special responsibility allowances for undertaking additional duties.
- 2.1.3 Councillors may also claim the cost of travel and subsistence expenses and for expenditure on the care of children or dependants whilst on approved duties.

### 3. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING OUR REVIEW

#### 3.1 The Public Service Principle

- 3.1.1 This is the principle that an important part of being a councillor is the desire to serve the public and, therefore, not all of what a councillor does should be remunerated. Part of a councillor's time should be given voluntarily. The consolidated guidance notes the importance of this principle when arriving at the recommended basic allowance.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, we found that a public service concept or ethos was articulated and supported by all the councillors we interviewed and in the responses to the questionnaire completed by councillors as part of our review.
- 3.1.2 The principle of public service had not been formally recognised in the last review. However, to provide transparency and increase an understanding of the Panel's work, we will recommend the application of an explicit Public Service Discount (or PSD). Such a PSD is applied to the time input necessary to fulfil the role of a councillor. Further explanation of the PSD to be applied is given below in section 4.

#### 3.2 The Fair Remuneration Principle

- 3.2.1 Alongside the belief that the role of the elected Councillor should, in part, be viewed as unpaid voluntary service, we advocate a principle of fair remuneration. The Panel in 2021 continues to subscribe to the view promoted by the independent Councillors' Commission:

*Remuneration should not be an incentive for service as a councillor. Nor should lack of remuneration be a barrier. The basic allowance should encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds and with a wide range of skills to serve as local councillors. Those who participate in and contribute to the democratic process should not suffer unreasonable financial disadvantage as a result of doing so.<sup>2</sup>*

- 3.2.2 We are keen to ensure that our recommended scheme of allowances provides reasonable financial compensation for councillors. Equally, the scheme should be fair, transparent, logical, simple, and seen as such.
- 3.2.3 Hence, we continue to acknowledge that:
- (i) allowances should apply to roles within the Council, not individual councillors;
  - (ii) allowances should represent reasonable *compensation* to councillors for expenses they incur and time they commit in relation to their role, not *payment* for their work; and
  - (iii) special responsibility allowances are used to recognise the *significant* additional responsibilities which attach to some roles, not merely the extra time required.
- 3.2.4 In making our recommendations, we have therefore sought to maintain a balance between:
- (i) the voluntary quality of a councillor's role;

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<sup>1</sup> The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and HM Revenue & Customs, *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraph 68.

<sup>2</sup> Rodney Brooke and Declan Hall, *Members' Remuneration: Models, Issues, Incentives and Barriers*. London: Communities and Local Government, 2007, p.3.

- (ii) the need for appropriate financial recognition for the expenses incurred and time spent by councillors in fulfilling their roles; and
- (iii) the overall need to ensure that the scheme of allowances is neither an incentive nor a barrier to service as a councillor.

3.2.5 The Panel is also keen to ensure that the scheme of allowances is understandable in the way it is calculated. This includes ensuring the bandings and differentials of the allowances are as transparent as possible.

3.2.6 In making our recommendations, we wish to emphasise that any possible negative impact they may have is not intended and should not be interpreted as a reflection on any individual councillor’s performance in the role.

## 4. CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 Basic Allowance

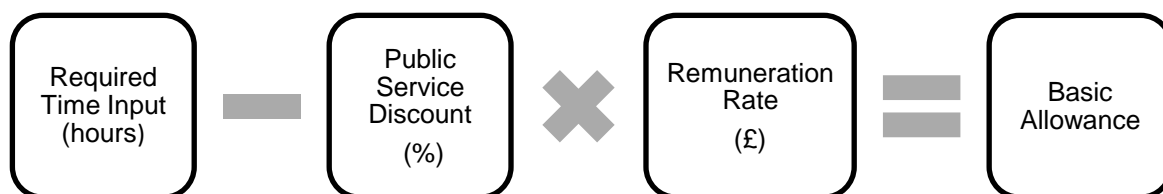
4.1.1 A Council’s scheme of allowances must include provision for a basic allowance, payable at an equal flat rate to all councillors. The guidance on arriving at the basic allowance states, “Having established what local councillors do, and the hours which are devoted to these tasks the local authorities will need to take a view on the rate at which, and the number of hours for which, councillors ought to be remunerated.”<sup>3</sup>

4.1.2 In addition to the regular cycles of Council and committee meetings, a number of working groups involving councillors may operate. Many councillors are also appointed by the Council to a number of external organisations.

4.1.3 We recognise that councillors are responsible to their electorate as:

- Representatives of a particular ward;
- Community leaders;
- Decision makers for the whole Council area;
- Policy makers for future activities of the Council;
- Scrutineers and auditors of the work of the Council; and
- Regulators of planning, licensing and other matters required by Government.

4.1.4 The guidance identifies the issues and factors an IRP should have regard to when making a scheme of allowances.<sup>4</sup> For the basic allowance we considered three variables in our calculation: the time required to execute the role effectively; the public service discount; and the rate for remuneration.



<sup>3</sup> The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and HM Revenue & Customs, *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraph 67.

<sup>4</sup> The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Department for Communities and Local Government, and Inland Revenue, *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraphs 66-81.

4.1.5 Each of the variables is explained below.

#### Required Time Input

4.1.6 We ascertained the average number of hours necessary per week to undertake the role of a councillor (with no special responsibilities) from questionnaires and interviews with councillors and through reference to the relevant Councillor Role Profiles. In addition, we considered information about the number, range, and frequency of committee meetings.<sup>5</sup>

4.1.7 Discounting attendance at political meetings (which we judged to be centred upon internal political management), we find that the average time commitment required to execute the role of a councillor with no special responsibilities is **12** hours per week.

#### Public Service Discount (PSD)

4.1.8 From the information analysed, we found councillors espoused a high sense of public duty. Given the weight of evidence presented to us concerning, among other factors, the levels of responsibility, the varied nature of the role, the need for learning and development, and the increasing accessibility and expectations of the public, we continue to recommend a Public Service Discount of **20 per cent** to the calculation of the basic allowance. This percentage sits within the lower range of PSDs applied to basic allowances by councils.

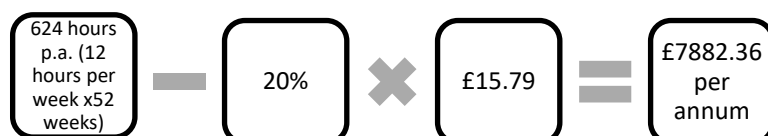
#### Remuneration Rate

4.1.9 After establishing the expected time input to be remunerated, we considered a remuneration rate. We came to a judgement about the rate at which the councillors ought to be remunerated for the work they do.

4.1.10 To help identify an hourly rate for calculating allowances, we utilised relevant statistics about the local labour market published by the Office for National Statistics. We selected the average (median), full-time gross<sup>6</sup> wage per hour for the Local Authority area of King's Lynn and West Norfolk **£15.79**<sup>7</sup>

#### Calculating the basic allowance

4.1.11 After determining the amount of time required each week to fulfil the role (11 hours), the level of PSD to be applied (20%) and the hourly rate to be used (£15.79), we calculated the basic allowance as follows:



<sup>5</sup> The summary responses to the questionnaires are available on request.

<sup>6</sup> The basic allowance, special responsibility allowance, dependants' carers' allowance, and co-optees' allowance are taxable as employment income.

<sup>7</sup> The Nomis official labour market statistics: Hourly Pay – Gross median (£) For full-time employee jobs by place of residence: UK December 2023.

- 4.1.12 The gross Basic Allowance before the PSD is applied is **£9,852.96**. Following the application of the PSD this leads to a basic allowance of **£7882.36** per annum.
- 4.1.13 This amount is intended to recognise the overall contribution made by councillors, including their work on council bodies, ward work and attendance on external bodies.
- 4.1.14 We did also note the levels of basic allowance currently allocated by other Norfolk district/borough councils (see table below and Appendix 3).

<b>Council</b>	<b>Norfolk district/borough Councils: Basic Allowances (£) 2024</b>
Broadland District Council	5,050
Great Yarmouth Borough Council	6,051
<b>King's Lynn &amp; West Norfolk Borough Council</b>	<b>7,518</b>
North Norfolk District Council	6,491
Norwich City Council	7,937
South Norfolk District Council	5,553
<b>Average</b>	<b>6,433</b>

- 4.1.15 The Panel wished to ensure the level of basic allowance does not constitute a barrier to candidates from all sections of the community standing, or re-standing, for election as councillors and was also mindful of the Council's financial constraints. The Panel was of the view that this review has continued to make recommendations to ensure that the current basic is in accordance with the principle of fair remuneration.

**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that the Basic Allowance payable to all members of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council be £7,882 per annum.**

## 4.2 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

4.2.1 Special Responsibility Allowances are awarded to councillors who perform significant additional responsibilities over and above the roles and expenses covered by the basic allowance. These special responsibilities must be related to the discharge of the council's functions.

4.2.2 The 2003 Regulations do not limit the number of SRAs which may be paid, nor do they prohibit the payment of more than one SRA to any one councillor. They do require that an SRA be paid to at least one councillor who is not a member of the controlling group of the Council. As the guidance suggests, if the majority of councillors receive an SRA, the local electorate may rightly question the justification for this.<sup>8</sup>

4.2.3 We conclude from the evidence we have considered that the following offices bear *significant* additional responsibilities:

- Leader of the Council and Chair of the Cabinet
- Vice Chair of Cabinet and Deputy Leader
- Cabinet Members (6)
- Chairs of Policy and Review Panels (3)
- Vice Chairs of Policy and Review Panels (3)
- Chair of Audit Committee
- Vice Chair of Audit Committee
- Chair of Planning Committee
- Vice Chair of Planning Committee
- Chair of Licensing and Appeals Board and Licensing Committee
- Vice Chair of Licensing and Appeals Board and Licensing Committee
- Chair of Standards Committee
- Vice Chair of Standards Committee
- Standards Independent Co-Optee
- Mayor
- Deputy Mayor
- Larger Opposition Group Leader
- Other Opposition Group Leader(s)
- Chair of King's Lynn Area Committee

### One SRA Only Rule

4.2.4 To improve the transparency of the scheme of allowances, we feel that no councillor should be entitled to receive at any time more than **one SRA**. If a councillor can receive more than one SRA, then the public are unable to ascertain the actual level of remuneration for an individual councillor from a reading of the Scheme of Allowances.

4.2.5 Moreover, the One SRA Only Rule avoids the possible anomaly of the Leader receiving a lower allowance than another councillor. If two or more allowances are applicable to a councillor, then the higher-valued allowance would be received. The One SRA Only Rule is common practice for many councils. Our calculations for the SRAs are based on this principle, which should be highlighted:

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<sup>8</sup> The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and HM Revenue & Customs, *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraph 72.



**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that that no councillor shall be entitled to receive at any time more than one Special Responsibility Allowance and that this One SRA Only Rule be re-adopted into the new Scheme of Allowances.**

#### The Maximum Number of SRA's Payable

- 4.2.6 In accordance with the 2006 Statutory Guidance (paragraph 72) the Panel is of the view that the Council should adhere to the principal that no more than 50% of Council Members (28) should receive an SRA at any one time.

**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that the Council should adhere to a maximum number of SRA's payable at any one time that does not exceed 50% of Council Members (28 Members).**

#### Calculating SRAs

- 4.2.7 The Panel continues to support a criteria and formula for calculating the Leader of the Council allowance based on a multiplier of the Basic Allowance, this role carries the most significant additional responsibilities and is the most time consuming.
- 4.2.8 We applied a multiplier of the basic allowance to establish the Leader's SRA. Other SRAs are then valued downwards as a percentage of the Leader's allowance. This approach has the advantage that, when future adjustments to the SRAs are required, changing the Leader's SRA will have a proportionate and easily calculable effect on the other SRAs within the scheme.

We grouped together in Tiers those roles that we judged to have a significant level of responsibility. The rationale for these tiers of responsibility is discussed below.

#### Leader of Council and Chair of Cabinet (Tier One)

- 4.2.9 The Council elects a Leader who is ultimately responsible for the discharge of all executive functions of the Council. The Leader is the principal policy maker and has personal authority to determine delegated powers to the rest of the Cabinet. The Leader is also responsible for the appointment (and dismissal) of members of the Cabinet and their respective areas of responsibility.
- 4.2.10 The multiplier we applied to calculate the Leader's SRA is 300% (3.0 x times) the basic allowance. If the recommended option of a basic allowance with a PSD of 20% is adopted, this results in a Leader's Allowance of £23,646.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 300% of the basic allowance, £23,646.**

#### Vice Chair of Cabinet (Tier Two)

- 4.2.11 The Vice Chair of Cabinet (Deputy Leader) usually acts on the Leader's behalf in their absence. From the information we gathered, we continue to consider this additional responsibility should be reflected in the level of allowance. Therefore, we recommend the Vice Chair's SRA continues to be set at 55% of the Leader's SRA. If our recommendations concerning the basic allowance and the Leader's SRA are adopted, this results in an allowance of £13,005.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Vice Chair of Cabinet and Deputy Leader receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 55% of the Leader's Allowance, £13,005.**

#### Cabinet Members (Tier Three)

4.2.12 From the evidence gathered, including questionnaire response and the face-to-face interviews, we consider the members of the Cabinet should receive an allowance of £10,641, 45% of the Leader's Allowance.

4.2.13 Evidence from the interviews we undertook with councillors, underlines the responsibility of the members of the Cabinet for many of the Council's functions. Members of the Cabinet hold considerable responsibility for their respective portfolios. In addition, we found the time commitment for the role continues to be significant.

**WE RECOMMEND that Cabinet Members receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 45% of the Leader, £10,641.**

#### Chair of Planning Committee (Tier Four)

4.2.14 The Panel was of the view that the role of the Chair of the Planning Committee continues to have a high impact and profile across the Council. The Panel was of the view that the allowance should better reflect the considerable responsibility undertaken both during and between the committee meetings. We therefore recommend that the role be recognised at Tier Four allowance and receive an allowance of £9,458, 40% of the Leader's Allowance.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of the Planning Committee receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 40% of the Leader, £9,458**

#### Mayor (Tier Five)

4.2.15 The Panel was of the view that the Mayor's role based on the civic contribution of the role and the charring of the Council Meeting should be set at a rate of 35% of the Leader's Allowance, £8,276.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Mayor receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 35% of the Leader, £8,276**

#### Chairs of the Policy and Review Panels and Chair of the Audit Committee (Tier Six)

4.2.16 The Panel is of the view that the role of scrutiny, accountability and the role of audit are a growing and important role and recent Government Statutory Guidance (2024) promoted the scope and responsibilities of the overview and scrutiny function. The Government and Local Government Association have also noted the growing importance of the audit function to support financial stability and governance across the Council.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Chairs of the Policy and Review Panels and the Chair of the Audit Committee should now receive an allowance of 20% of the Leader's Allowance, £4,729.**

#### Chair of the Licensing Committee and Licensing Appeals Board (Tier Seven)

4.2.17 The Panel was of the view that the Licensing Appeals Board and Licensing Committee Chair continued to be an evolving role based on the frequency of meetings and the changing demands based on the legislative requirements.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of the Licensing Appeals Board and Licensing Committee should continue to receive an allowance of 15% of the Leader's Allowance, £3,546.**

Vice Chair of the Planning Committee (Tier Eight)

- 4.2.18 The Panel recommend that the role of Vice Chair of the Planning Committee should continue to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance and that all the Vice Chair's allowances continue to be set at a rate of 35% of the Chair's Allowance. In the case of Planning the Vice Chair should receive an allowance of £3,310.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Vice Chair of the Planning Committee receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 35% of the Planning Committee Chair's Allowance, £3,310.**

Deputy Mayor (Tier Nine)

- 4.2.19 The Panel recommend that the role of Deputy Mayor continues to be a significant role and should receive an allowance of 35% of the Mayor's Allowance, £2,897.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Deputy Mayor receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 35% of the Mayor's Allowance, £2,897.**

Vice Chairs of the Policy and Review Panels and Vice Chair of the Audit Committee (Tier Ten)

- 4.2.20 The Panel recommend that the Vice Chairs of the Policy and Review Panels and the Vice Chair of the Audit Committee should receive an allowance of 35% of the Chairs of the Policy and Review Panels and Chair of the Audit Committee, £1,655.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Vice Chairs of the Policy and Review Panels and the Vice Chair of the Audit Committee receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 35% Chair's Allowance, £1,655.**

Vice Chair of the Licensing and Appeals Board and Licensing Committee (Tier Eleven)

- 4.2.21 The Panel recommend that the Vice Chair of the Licensing and Appeals Board and Licensing Committee should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 35% of the Chair's Allowance, £1,241.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Vice Chairman of the Licensing and Appeals Board and Licensing Committee should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 35% of the Chair's Allowance, £1,241.**

Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee (Tier Twelve and Thirteen)

- 4.2.22 The Panel recommend that no change be made to the SRA for Chair of the Standards Committee, 5% of the Leader's Allowance, £1,182. The Panel further recommend that the Vice Chair of the Standards Committee receive an SRA of 35% of the Chair's Allowance, £414.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of the Standards Committee receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 5% of the Leader's Allowance, £1,182. We further recommend that the Vice Chair of the Standards Committee receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 35% of the Chair's Allowance, £414.**

#### Chairman of the King's Lynn Area Committee (Tier Twelve)

- 4.2.23 The Panel continue to regard the role of the Chair of the King's Lynn Area Committee as a position that should continue to attract a SRA. The panel was of the view that the allowance should be based on the maximum allowance recommended that can be awarded to a Chair of a Parish and Town Council. The Panel therefore recommends that the Chair of the King's Lynn Area Committee receive an allowance that equates to 10% of the Basic Allowance, £788.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of the King's Lynn Area Committee receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 10% of the Basic Allowance, £788. This equates to the maximum recommended allowance for a Chair of a Parish and Town Council.**

#### Larger Opposition Group Leader

- 4.2.24 The Panel continues to recognise the importance of the role of the Opposition Group Leaders in motivating and co-ordinating Group activities, ensuring accountability and constructive challenge of the Cabinet. Since the last review the (September 2021) the opposition groups have again increased in size and the Panel was again of the view as in 2021 that the current allowance for the Larger Opposition Group Leader was not commensurate with the requirements and responsibilities of the role.

- 4.2.25 The Panel is therefore of the view that the allowance for the Opposition Group Leaders should be based on the size of the political Group. The Panel therefore recommends a per Member rate for the Opposition Group Leaders. This will allow for flexibility in the allowance and for it to respond to changes in the size of the Opposition Groups. The Panel recommends a per Member rate of **£143** per Group Member. This is calculated by dividing the recommended Basic Allowance by fifty-five, the total number of Councillors. For the Larger Opposition Group Leader this will currently equate to an allowance of £3,003 based on the current twenty-one Group Members.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Larger Opposition Group Leader receive an allowance based on a per Member rate of £143 per Group Member. Currently this equates to an allowance of £3,003 (based on the current twenty-one Group Members). The Panel FURTHER RECOMMENDS that to be eligible for an allowance the opposition Group is required to have at least 10% (6) of total Members in the Group.**

#### Other Opposition Group Leader(s)

- 4.2.26 The Panel recommends that the Other Opposition Group Leader (s) also receive an allowance based on the same per Member rate, £143. This currently equates to an allowance of £1,287, based on the current nine Group Members.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Other Opposition Group Leader(s) receive an allowance based on a per Member rate of £143 per Group Member. Currently this equates to an allowance of £1,287 (based on the current nine Group Members). The Panel FURTHER RECOMMENDS that to be eligible for an allowance the opposition Group is required to have at least 10% (6) of total Members in the Group.**

#### Larger Opposition Group Deputy Leader and Other Opposition Group(s) Deputy Leader

- 4.2.27 The Panel recommends that the Special Responsibility Allowance for the roles of Larger Opposition Group Deputy Leader and Other Opposition Group(s) Deputy

Leader be withdrawn. This was also recommended in the 2015 and 2021 review.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Special Responsibility Allowance for the roles of Larger Opposition Group Deputy Leader and Other Opposition Group(s) Deputy Leader be withdrawn.**

#### Standards Independent Co-Optees Allowance

4.2.28 The Panel recommends that the allowance for a Co-Optee continues at the current rate (£255) and is subject to any indexation that will apply.

**WE RECOMMEND that the allowance for a Co-Optee continues at the current rate (£255) and is subject to any indexation that may apply.**

### **4.3 Travelling and Subsistence Allowance**

4.3.1 A scheme of allowances may provide for any councillor to be paid for travelling and subsistence undertaken in connection with any of the duties specified in Regulation 8 of the 2003 Regulations (see paragraph 5.10). Similarly, such an allowance may also be paid to co-opted Persons of a committee or sub-committee of the Council in connection with any of those approved duties, provided that their expenses are not also being met by a third party.

**WE RECOMMEND that travelling and subsistence allowance should be payable to councillors and co-opted/Independent Persons in connection with any approved duties in accordance with the HMRC recommendations. We propose no changes to the current travel and subsistence allowances. WE ALSO RECOMMEND that subsistence rates continue in accordance with the officer rates.**

### **4.4 Information, Communication and Technology Allowance (ICT Allowance)**

4.4.1 The Council currently award all Councillors an ICT allowance of **£204** per annum that is subject to indexation. In 2015 and again in 2021 the Panel recommended that this allowance should be withdrawn. The Panel continues to recommend that the ICT allowance should be withdrawn and that any additional ICT costs should be met from the Basic Allowance.

**WE RECOMMEND that the ICT Allowance should be withdrawn as recommended in the 2015 and 2021 review.**

### **4.5 Child and Dependant Carers' Allowance**

4.5.1 The child and dependant carers' allowance should ensure that potential candidates are not deterred from standing for election and should enable current councillors to continue despite any change in their personal circumstances. The current scheme awards reimbursement at the rate of the Real Living Wage when using childminders, babysitters or other sitters for dependants while carrying out Approved duties. The scheme also allows for specialist Dependent Relative Care to be reimbursed at the actual cost up to a maximum of £30 per hour upon production of receipts.

4.5.2 The Panel is of the view that the Child and Dependant Carers' Allowance for childcare should be based on the rate of the **Real Living Wage** as determined by the Living Wage Foundation, currently **£12.60 per hour** (Reviewed annually in November) With regard to specialist Dependent Relative Care this should continue to be reimbursed for the actual cost incurred by the councillor upon production of receipts. In respect of

specialist care provision medical evidence that this type of care provision is required should also be provided and approved by an appropriate officer of the Council. The Panel is of the view that the maximum £30 per hour ceiling for this allowance should be removed.

**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that the Child and Dependant Carers' Allowance should continue as outlined in the current Scheme of Allowances and for Specialist Care should be based at cost upon production of receipts and include a requirement of medical evidence that this type of care be required. The allowance should have no monthly maximum claim and the £30 per hour ceiling should be withdrawn when undertaking Approved duties. In the case of Childcare, WE FURTHER RECOMMEND that this should now be based on the Real Living Wage as determined by the Living Wage Foundation, currently £12.60 per hour (Reviewed annually in November).**

**WE ALSO RECOMMEND that the Council should actively promote the allowance to prospective and new councillors both before and following an election. This may assist in supporting greater diversity of councillor representation.**

## **4.6 Parental Leave**

4.6.1 There is no uniform national policy to support councillors who require parental leave for maternity, paternity, or adoption leave. According to the Fawcett Society (Does Local Government Work for Women, 2018) a *'lack of maternity, paternity provision or support'* is a real barrier for women aged 18-44 to fulfil their role as a councillor.

4.6.2 We are of the view that support should be provided for parental leave although we do not wish to stipulate an exact policy/procedure. The Panel is aware that the Local Government Association (Labour Group) has developed a model policy that has been adopted by a growing number of councils.

4.6.3 There is no legal right to parental leave of any kind for people in elected public office. However, as a way of improving the diversity of Councillors, the Panel would recommend that the Members' Allowance Scheme should be amended to include provisions that clarify that:

- All Councillors shall continue to receive their Basic Allowance in full for a period up to six months in the case of absence from their Councillor duties due to leave relate to maternity, paternity, adoption shared parental leave or sickness absence
- Councillors entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance shall continue to receive their allowance in full for a period of six months, in the case of absence from their Councillor duties due to leave related to maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental leave or sickness absence
- Where for reasons connected with sickness, maternity leave, adoption leave, paternity leave or shared parental leave a Councillor is unable to attend a meeting of the Council for a period of six months, a dispensation by Council can be sought in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972
- If a replacement to cover the period of absence under these provisions is appointed by Council or the Leader (or in the case of a party group position the party group) the replacement shall be entitled to claim a Special

Responsibility Allowance pro rata for the period over which the cover is provided.

- If a Councillor stands down, or an election is held during the period when a Councillor is absent due to any of the above and the Councillor is not re-elected or decides not to stand for re-election, their Basic Allowance any Special Responsibility Allowance will cease from the date they leave office.

4.6.4 The Panel is conscious that these provisions do not replicate the LGA policy, but that policy introduces elements that are more akin to employees which in terms of employment legislation does not include Councillors. We feel that our recommendations more simply and adequately reflect the situation relating to Councillors and clarify for them what they can expect. Borough Councillors however may wish to further develop the above recommendations so that they reflect the LGA policy.

**WE RECOMMEND that the approach outlined continues to be adopted as the basis of a policy to support parental leave for councillors. The policy on Parental Leave for Councillors should be actively promoted to prospective and current Councillors alongside the Dependants' Carers Allowance. This should form part of a programme led by the Council and supported by political groups; to enhance and increase the diversity of councillor representation.**

#### **4.7 Indexing of Allowances**

4.7.1 A scheme of allowances may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances in line with a specified index. The present scheme makes provision for the basic allowance, the special responsibility allowances and Co-Optees allowance to be adjusted annually in line with staff salaries.

**WE RECOMMEND that the basic allowance, each of the SRAs and the Co-Optees' Allowance be increased annually in line with the percentage increase in staff salaries based on Spinal Column Point 43. This should be implemented from April 2025 for a period of up to four years. After this period, the Scheme should be reviewed again by an independent remuneration panel. The next review should be no later than November 2028.**

#### **4.8 Revocation of current Scheme of Allowances / Implementation of new Scheme**

4.8.1 The 2003 Regulations provide that a scheme of allowances may only be revoked with effect from the beginning of a financial year, and that this may only take effect on the basis that the authority makes a further scheme of allowances for the period beginning with the date of revocation.

**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that the new scheme of allowances to be agreed by the Council be implemented with effect from the beginning of the 2025-26 financial year, at which time the current scheme of allowances will be revoked.**

## **5. OUR INVESTIGATION**

### **5.1 Background**

- 5.1.1 As part of this review, a questionnaire was issued to all councillors to support and inform the review. Responses were received from 11 of the 55 current councillors (20% response). The information obtained was helpful in informing our deliberations.
- 5.1.2 We interviewed *fifteen* current councillors using a structured questioning process. We are grateful to all our interviewees for their assistance.
- 5.1.3 We should also thank Sam Winter, Democratic Services Manager and Lauren Steele, Administrative Assistant for their assistance and support during the review.

### **5.2 Councillors' views on the level of allowances**

- 5.2.1 A summary of the councillors' responses to the questionnaire are attached as Appendix 2.

## **6. APPROVED COUNCILLOR DUTIES**

- 6.1.1 The Panel reviewed the recommended duties for which allowances should be payable and recommend that no changes be made.

**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND: That no changes are made to the Approved Duties as outlined in the Members' Allowance Scheme.**

**Mark Palmer (Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel)  
Director: Development and Governance, South East Employers  
November 2024.**





## Appendix 1: Summary of Panel's Recommendations

Allowance	Current Amount for 2023-24	Number	Recommended Allowance (20% PSD)	Recommended Allowance Calculation
<b>Basic (BA)</b>				
<b>Total Basic:</b>	<b>£7,518</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>£7,882</b>	

<b>Special Responsibility:</b>				
Leader of the Council & Chair of Cabinet	£19,653	1	£23,646	300% of BA
Deputy Leader and Vice Chair of Cabinet	£10,809	1	£13,005	55% of Leader's Allowance
Cabinet Members	£8,841	6	£10,641	45% of Leader's Allowance
Chairs Policy and Review Panels	£2,751	3	£4,729	20% of Leader's Allowance
Vice Chairs of Policy and Review Panels	£1,104	3	£1,655	35% of Chair's Allowance
Chair of the Audit Committee	£2,751	1	£4,729	20% of the Leader's Allowance
Vice Chair of the Audit Committee	£1,104	1	£1,655	35% of the Chair's Allowance
Chair of Planning Committee	£7,164	1	£9,458	40% of Leader's Allowance
Vice Chair of Planning Committee	£3,129	1	£3,310	35% of Chair's Allowance
Chair of Licensing Appeals Board and Licensing Committee	£3,234	1	£3,546	15% of Leader's Allowance
Vice Chair of Licensing Appeals Board and Licensing Committee	£1,410	1	£1,241	35% of Chair's Allowance
Chair of Standards Committee	£984	1	£1,182	5% of Leader's Allowance
Vice Chair of Standards Committee	£393	1	£414	35% of the Chair's Allowance
Standards Independent Co-Optee	£255	1	£255	
Mayor	£7,431	1	£8,276	35% of the Leader's Allowance
Deputy Mayor	£2,598	1	£2,897	35% of the Mayor's Allowance
Larger Opposition Group Leader	£984	1	£3,003	£143 per Group Member
Larger Opposition Group Deputy Leader	£435	1	SRA to be Withdrawn	

Other Opposition Group Leader	£588	1	£1,287	£143 per Group Member
Other Opposition Group Deputy Leader	£270	1	SRA to be Withdrawn	
Chairman of the King's Lynn Area Committee	£360	1	£788	10% of the Basic Allowance
ICT Allowance	£204	55	Allowance to be Withdrawn	