

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES FOR 2022/2023

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise Council of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, in respect of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2022/2023.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the Regulations), the Council must adopt a new Scheme before 1st April each year and before amending a Scheme, must have regard to the recommendations of its Independent Remuneration Panel. This report sets out the Panel's recommendations for the Scheme for the year 2022/2023.

3. Review of the Scheme

- 3.1 In undertaking its review, the Panel had regard to guidance issued by the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. It also considered information regarding the allowances paid by other authorities in the region and took account of representations received.
- 3.2 The Panel received verbal and / or written representations from group leaders or their representatives. It also received information about the responsibilities associated with various roles, including the Chair and Vice Chair of the Area Committees, Planning and Highways Committees and Licensing and Regulatory Committee. In addition, the Panel had the benefit of meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair of an Area Committee and the Chair of a Planning and Highways Committee. On this occasion, no written representations were received from the wider Council membership.
- 3.3 The Panel wishes to thank all those members who gave their time to meet with the Panel or submit representations.

4. Submissions received

4.1 Representations by Group Leaders

- 4.1.1 Group Leaders were offered the opportunity to address the Panel should they wish to do so. The Panel met with those representatives who accepted the invitation and their submissions are summarised below.

4.2 Summary of Submissions made by the Leader of the Council

- 4.2.1 The Panel met with the Council Leader, Cllr Graeme Miller, who informed the Panel that in view of the increasing importance and urgency of environmental issues, he was minded to create an additional Cabinet portfolio with responsibility for “green” issues. He also made reference to a recommendation of the Panel made at the previous review, regarding the application of an indexation uplift to the current level of basic allowance, and explained that the Council had not considered it appropriate to implement that recommendation, when it adopted the Scheme for 2021/2022.

4.4 Summary of Submissions made by Opposition Group Leaders or their Representatives

- 4.4.1 The submissions from opposition groups were to the effect that the number of SRAs awarded and the amounts paid were too high. Many of the representations reiterated points that had consistently been made by the opposition groups in previous reviews. While the members who met with the Panel recognised it was not the Panel’s role to make recommendations regarding the governance structure in place at the Council, the two largest groups provided information regarding how they would structure the Council, by way of setting the background and context for their representations.

- 4.4.2 One of the groups reiterated views it had previously expressed, in support of the following:

- SRAs for Deputy Cabinet Members to be removed, with the posts being voluntary or discontinued, with a view to Cabinet members working full time on their brief.
- SRAs for all Vice Chair positions on Area Committees to be removed, to bring them in line with Scrutiny Committee Vice Chairs, and all Area Vice Chair responsibilities to be transferred to the Chair.
- Area Committee Chairs’ SRAs to reduce by 50%.

- Scrutiny Committee Chairs' SRAs to reduce by 50%.
- No reason for the basic allowance to increase. If it was considered necessary, SRAs should be reduced to pay for this.

4.4.3 Another opposition group reiterated its support for the following:

- SRAs for Deputy Cabinet Members and the Vice Chair of Scrutiny Coordinating Committee to be removed.
- Reduce SRAs overall by 15%.
- Reduce the basic allowance, which is too generous.
- Set the basic allowance at a level that is sufficient to cover food, drink, travel, broadband, phone rental etc. and there should be no additional payment for matters such as these. The ability to claim broadband and telephone allowances, while also being provided with a mobile phone, meant that councillors were effectively being paid twice for the same thing.
- Replace the Mayor and Deputy Mayor with an unpaid elected chairperson and deputy chairperson and remove the associated allowances.
- Adopt a similar approach to the calculation of the SRAs for the Leader and Cabinet members to that adopted for the calculation of SRAs for opposition leaders, and base it on the majority group's level of political control of the Council.

4.4.4 Additional points made on this occasion related to:

- What was or was not said to the Panel while undertaking its review, as compared to what was said in the course of Council meetings, and the possible "politicization" of the Panel.
- Attributing any representations received to named individuals.
- Two of the Deputy Cabinet posts being vacant, suggesting there was insufficient work for those posts, which in turn had implications for how the roles had been assessed.
- Two Opposition members holding posts for which SRAs were awarded, which they did not consider to be justified.
- Reducing the allowances, to demonstrate that councillors understand the hardship faced by others.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.1 Not unexpectedly, a number of the submissions made by the opposition parties have been made to the Panel in the course of previous reviews. The Panel considered those views in formulating its recommendations on those occasions, and should circumstances change, or new information be brought to the Panel's attention, the Panel would be open to revisiting the allowances concerned. The Panel was not however persuaded on this occasion that there was any need to amend the level of allowances previously agreed, subject to its views below regarding the linking of the basic allowance with staff pay awards.
- 5.2 Should an additional Cabinet position be created for a "Green" portfolio, the Panel was supportive, as an interim position, of such a post being awarded the same level of allowance as the other Cabinet portfolio positions below the Leader, Deputy and Cabinet Secretary. It would however, wish to hear evidence from the postholder at its next review, regarding the demands and responsibilities of the post. The Panel also considered that such a position may be of a somewhat different nature to other more "traditional" Cabinet portfolios, and in the circumstances, it was minded to recommend that should a deputy be appointed to such a portfolio, no allowance should be attached to the deputy position until the Panel had had the opportunity to hear evidence from the postholder, regarding the responsibilities associated with the post.
- 5.3 Whilst the Panel does not propose any changes to SRAs, as noted at previous reviews, it is mindful that the basic allowance has not been increased for a number of years. At its previous review, the Panel recommended an uplift based on the main pay award used for Council staff, excluding any separate pay award increases that are given to specific groups, for example lower paid staff or Chief Officers. This was not however implemented by the Council when it considered the Panel's report and adopted its scheme for 2021/2022. In this regard, the Panel wishes to be clear that any allegations regarding what was or was not said in Council meetings regarding the review and alleged "politicization" of the Panel, are not matters with which it is concerned. The Panel formulates its recommendations with no regard to what comments or statements politicians may subsequently make with regard to its report. In addition, the Panel remains of the view that ordinarily, representations received should not be attributed to individuals, as it does not wish to discourage members from submitting their full and frank views.

- 5.4 The Panel notes that a number of other authorities in the region apply an annual uplift to their Scheme linked with NJC pay awards, and it is minded to recommend an uplift to the basic award for 2022/2023 on this basis. The Council is part of the national pay negotiations process undertaken by Local Authority Employers and the Trade Unions. The Panel is supportive of the principle of linking the basic allowance with any award in respect of staff pay during the previous financial year. As previously, the Panel recommends that this be based on the main pay award used for Council staff, excluding any separate pay award increases that are given to specific groups, for example lower paid staff or Chief Officers. The Panel also considers that it should continue to review the Scheme on an annual basis, to consider whether it remains appropriate for further uplifts to be applied in future years, in line with any staff pay award.
- 5.5 The Panel noted that the NJC pay award for 2021/22 has not yet been confirmed, with the current offer by employers of 1.75% not having been accepted by Trades Unions. In order to make its recommendation for the year, the Panel has considered the assumption included in the Council's medium term financial plan, which is 2% for staff pay awards. The Panel therefore recommends that the basic allowance for 2022/2023 be increased to £8,536 for the financial year 2022/2023 and that the special responsibility allowances remain unchanged.
- 5.6 The Panel's recommendations regarding the level of allowances for 2022/2023 are summarised in the Appendix to this report.
- 5.7 The Panel wishes to express its thanks to those who have contributed to this review.

John Anderson CBE
Karen Straughair
Stuart Green

December 2021

Appendix

Type of Allowance	Amount per annum £
Basic Allowance	8,536
Special Responsibility Allowances	
Leader of the Council	37,667
Deputy Leader of the Council	25,111
Cabinet Secretary	25,111
Cabinet Member with Portfolio	20,716
Deputy Cabinet Member*	12,556
Leader of the Majority Group in Opposition - allowance calculated as a percentage of Leader's SRA, up to maximum of 25%.	
Leader of the second largest Group in Opposition – allowance calculated as a percentage of the Majority Opposition Group Leader's allowance, up to a maximum of 50%	
Chair of the following:	
Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee	12,556
Thematic Scrutiny Committee	5,179
Area Committee	10,350
Licensing and Regulatory Committee	8,369
Planning and Highways Committee	6,277
Vice Chair of the following:	
Area Committee	6,277
Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee	6,277
Licensing and Regulatory Committee	4,184
Other Special Responsibility Allowances:	
Membership of Adoption and Permanency Placement Panel	4,184
Fostering Panel	4,184
Co-optees' Allowances	
Audit and Governance Committee	
Chairman	5,000
Independent member	2,500

Mayoral

Mayoral Allowance	12,000
Deputy Mayoral	6,000

Carer's allowance

Actual expenditure up to a maximum of the equivalent of the current National Living Wage or National Minimum Wage hourly rate, as appropriate, dependent upon the age of the worker. The rate applicable shall be subject to automatic increases in line with uprating of the Adult National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage.

Travel Allowances (for elected members and co-optees)

Motor Cycle allowance	24p per mile
Bicycle Allowance	20p per mile
Car Allowance	45p per mile for first 10,000 mile and 25p thereafter

Passenger Supplement 5p per mile for the passenger (not exceeding 4)

The above rates match Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs authorised mileage rates and will be updated when HMRC publishes revised allowances

Subsistence Allowances (for elected members and co-optees)

In the case of absence from the usual place of residence for a continuous period which exceeds 4 hours but does not involve an overnight absence, subsistence is payable as per the table set out below:

Breakfast Allowance	£6.22
Lunch Allowance	£8.55
Tea Allowance	£3.37
Evening Meal Allowance	£10.59

The subsistence rates shall be reduced as shown below in respect of meals provided free of charge by any authority or body during the period to which the allowance relates.

Reduction of Subsistence Allowance for Meals Provided Free of charge:

Reduction for Breakfast provided	£6.22
Lunch provided	£8.55
Tea provided	£3.37
Dinner provided	£10.59

Overnight Accommodation

The allowance will not be claimable as an allowance as such, rather reasonable costs of an overnight stay (including breakfast) will be met for business class accommodation (3 star or 4 star) within and outside of London. Unless there are exceptional circumstances the Council will book the accommodation direct selecting the most

economic option available and utilising the established procurement arrangements in place. Where exceptional circumstances exist, these will be approved in advance by the Executive Director of Corporate Services and reasonable costs will be reimbursed subject to submission of receipts.

Grant payable for Use of Rooms or Halls for Ward Surgeries	£15 maximum per occasion
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Telephone Calls Allowance	£15 per quarter
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Broadband – actual costs to be reimbursed up to a maximum of £15 per month with a contribution from each Member of £3 per month where private use is made for the facility.

*Note: Should a Deputy Cabinet Member be appointed in respect of a “Green” portfolio, any allowance attached to the position is subject to the Panel first hearing evidence regarding the associated responsibilities and recommending that such an allowance is appropriate.