

## **Members' Allowances Scheme**

### **Independent Remuneration Panel**

#### **Review of the Members' Allowances Scheme: Recommendations for 2018/2019**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Each Local Authority is required to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations to Council about the allowances to be paid to elected members in the following financial year. This report sets out the Panel's recommendations for the year 2018/2019.

## **2. Review of Allowances**

- 2.1 In undertaking this review, the Panel has had regard to guidance issued by the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. It has considered representations received from a number of elected members and has also considered the allowances paid by other authorities in the region.

The representations received are summarised below.

- 2.2 The view was expressed that the level of remuneration should remain the same, there should be no increase in the budget / total amount spent on members' allowances. It was also stated that evidence should be presented to the panel as to the work members do to claim the allowances. A number of members commented on the number and level of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs), with one representation stating that over 80% of councillors receive an SRA.

It was suggested that the Panel may wish to review some SRAs and consider whether they could be removed or reduced and the monies reallocated to the basic allowance.

- 2.3 There were also two separate "packages" of proposals put forward, namely:

- 2.3.1. there should be an across the board reduction in councillors' allowances to save £250,000 per annum, a significant reduction in the number of SRAs to no more than 25, the complete removal of allowances to deputy cabinet members and committee chairs, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor allowances should be scrapped entirely in favour of having an elected chair-person and travel and subsistence expenses should be removed, except where they relate to trips outside of the Sunderland area.

- 2.3.2 eliminate the post of policy assistant (Deputy Cabinet Member), reduce SRAs of all group leader, deputy, Cabinet, Leader and Deputy by 25%, reduce all committee SRAs by 50%, reduce Mayoral SRA by 50%, no changes to other SRAs or the basic allowance.

There should be one planning and highways committee rather than three to save time and resources – note regular lack of business.

- 2.4 The Panel has considered the representations received. The Panel has undertaken a number of reviews in recent years as part of which it has received information regarding the responsibilities associated with various roles within the Council's executive and committee structure and has met with a number of elected members. While it notes that under the Scheme for 2017/2018, 75% of members received an SRA, this reflects the Panel's recommendations in respect of the Scheme, which have consistently been accepted by the Council. Awarding an allowance to deputy cabinet members and committee chairs is not unusual and Sunderland Council is not out of step with other authorities in this regard.
- 2.5 The Panel is pleased to note that, as it had previously recommended, a report regarding the work of deputy cabinet members has been provided to Council, together with the annual Scrutiny and Areas Report.
- 2.6 With regard to the representation received regarding the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, it is not for the Panel to recommend that this arrangement is changed and indeed the Panel is advised by officers that under the Local Government Act 1972, the Council must elect a chairman at its annual meeting and at authorities such as Sunderland, the chairman is titled Mayor and the vice chairman is Deputy Mayor.
- 2.7 Whilst the decision on the allowance to be paid to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor is not one regarding which the Panel is required to be consulted, the practice at Sunderland has been to seek the Panel's views on this. The Panel remains of the view that it is appropriate for an allowance to be paid in respect of these roles, which involve time, effort and the incurring of expense associated with carrying out the functions.
- 2.8 With regard to the proposal in respect of the planning and highways committee, it is not for the Panel to recommend any changes in the Council's committee structure, however, should the Council decide to implement any changes, the Panel will be pleased to re-evaluate roles and responsibilities or to reassess existing roles.
- 2.9 The Panel does not recommend that the cost of travel or subsistence should be reduced or removed as it does not wish these costs to discourage individuals from seeking election as a councillor. Payment of such expenses is a feature of the allowances schemes at other authorities in the Tyne and Wear region and indeed wider afield and while there may be some variations in the approach taken by different authorities, Sunderland's approach is not unusual.
- 2.10 While it is not the role of the Panel to make decisions on the level of budget allocated to allowances by the Council, on this occasion, there is no recommendation to increase any of the allowances.

2.11 The Panel recommends that in respect of the year 2018/2019, no changes are made to the allowances scheme, save that the Carer's allowance is amended to align with the minimum national or living wage, as appropriate.

3. A summary of the main features of the scheme is attached to this report.

John Anderson CBE

John Cuthbert

Karen Straughair

March 2018

## Appendix

Type of Allowance	Amount per annum £
<b>Basic Allowance</b>	8,369
<b>Special Responsibility Allowances</b>	
Leader of the Council	37,667
Deputy Leader of the Council	25,111
Cabinet Secretary	25,111
Leader of Majority Party in Opposition	12,556
Leader of the Minority Party in Opposition	6,277
Deputy Leader of Majority Party in Opposition	8,369
Deputy Leader of the Minority Party in Opposition	4,184
Cabinet Member with Service Portfolio	20,716
Deputy Cabinet Member	12,556
<b>Chairman of the following:</b>	
Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee	12,556
Thematic Scrutiny Committee	5,179
Area Committee	10,350
Regulatory Committee	8,369
Licencing Committee	8,369
Planning and Highways Committee	6,277
Development Control Sub-Committees	6,277
Where the same person chairs the Licensing and Regulatory Committees, only one allowance will be payable but increased by a factor of 50%	
<b>Vice Chairman of the following:</b>	
Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee	6,277
Thematic Scrutiny Committee	2,590
Area Committee	6,277
<b>Other Special Responsibility Allowances:</b>	
Membership of Adoption and Permanency Placement Panel (to be paid to up to 2 Members)	4,184
Fostering Panel	4,184
<b>Co-optees' Allowances</b>	
Port Board	15,000
<b>Audit and Governance Committee</b>	
Chairman	6,277
Independent member	3,139
<b>Mayoral</b>	
Mayoral Allowance	17,205
Deputy Mayoral Allowance	5,735

**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.