

The Panel met in December 2013 and using a wide range of evidence considered the current arrangements and made a number of recommendations to the scheme. The Panel's recommendations are that:

- no indexation is applied to the Basic Allowance, Special Responsibility Allowances and Co-optees' Allowance until the Panel undertakes its next review; however, the indexation for the Dependents' Carers' Allowance and the Travel and Subsistence Allowances should remain in place
- the Basic Allowance remains at £8,687 and is inclusive of broadband provision, in-borough travel, in-borough parking, occasional taxis and all incidental expenses not otherwise specified in the Scheme. Therefore Members can no longer claim a Broadband Allowance of £9 per month.
- a Minority Group Deputy Leader's SRA should be paid to no more than two minority groups, subject to each group reaching seven in number and should be proportionate to the SRA of a single Deputy Leader of a Minority Group
- there should be no exceptions to the claims for in-borough travel rule, therefore Members can no longer claim for in-borough travel by bicycle.
- overnight stays are not appropriate for an approved duty which takes place less than 50 miles from the borough (Easthampstead House) unless a Member is unable to return home before midnight
- overnight stays for attending approved duties over 50 miles from the Borough (Easthampstead House) are only appropriate where a Member would otherwise have to leave home before 7am to attend in time or when the Member is unable to return home before midnight
- the maximum rates for an overnight stay are:
 - £150 for overnight stays in London and
 - £95 elsewhere and that these rates should be indexed.
- all travel and subsistence claims must be submitted within 3 months except at the end of the financial year when submission deadlines will be reduced to enable claims to be processed before the financial accounts for that year are closed
- claims will only be reimbursed on production of a valid receipt or proof of purchase (excluding mileage)
- the scheme should be updated to reflect that a Member may not receive allowances from more than one authority in respect of the same duties
- the scheme should clarify that claims relating to approved duties at other authorities or bodies, which have their own expenses schemes in place, should be submitted to the outside body in the first instance
- exceptions to the out-of-borough travel and accommodation rules should only be permitted on verifiable health grounds and any such exceptions should be reconsidered on an annual basis by the Director of Corporate Services

- the scheme should be updated to clarify that travel claims outside of the borough would include the whole journey and the factors influencing cost effectiveness
- the scheme should be updated to restrict the exemption to standard class rail travel to verifiable health grounds only
- the scheme should be updated to include criteria for the use of air travel and taxis
- Members continue to be able to join the Local Government Pension Scheme if they so wish subject to the outcome of the government's consultation
- the recommendations within the report should be implemented from 1 April 2014 or sooner.

Bracknell Forest Council will consider these recommendations at the Council meeting on Wednesday 30 April 2014.