



**The report of the Independent Remuneration Panel
appointed to review the allowances paid to Councillors
of Bracknell Forest Council**



December 2025

CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	1
2.	CURRENT SCHEME.....	1
3.	PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING OUR REVIEW	2
3.1	THE PUBLIC SERVICE PRINCIPLE.....	2
3.2	THE FAIR REMUNERATION PRINCIPLE.....	2
4.	CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	3
4.1	BASIC ALLOWANCE.....	3
4.2	SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES (SRAs).....	6
4.3	Co-Optees' and Independent Persons Allowances.....	10
4.4	TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE	100
4.5	DEPENDANTS' CARERS' ALLOWANCE	101
4.6	PARENTAL LEAVE	111
4.7	INDEXING OF ALLOWANCES.....	111
4.8	REVOCAION OF CURRENT SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES / IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW SCHEME	122
5.	OUR INVESTIGATION.....	122
5.1	BACKGROUND	122
5.2	COUNCILLORS' VIEWS ON THE LEVEL OF ALLOWANCES	12
6.	APPROVED COUNCILLOR DUTIES	122

Appendix 1	Basic Allowance/Special Responsibility Allowances/ Dependants' Carers' Allowance – Summary of Recommendations	13
Appendix 2	IRP Review of Councillor Allowances Responses to the Questionnaire 2025	
Appendix 3	Comparative data of allowances paid to councillors of South East Unitary Councils (South East Employers, Members Allowances Survey 2025)	

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 Bracknell Forest Council formally appointed the following persons to undertake this process and make recommendations on its future scheme.

John Murtagh – Former Immigration Enforcement Officer with the South Central ICE Team and a local resident

Andrew Stone - Former local businessperson and local resident

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 January 2022 and the current scheme came into effect from April 2022.

2.1.2 The Scheme currently provides that all councillors are each entitled to a total basic allowance of **£9,932 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.¹ 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 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 2024 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.²

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.

¹ 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.

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

- 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.
 - (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.

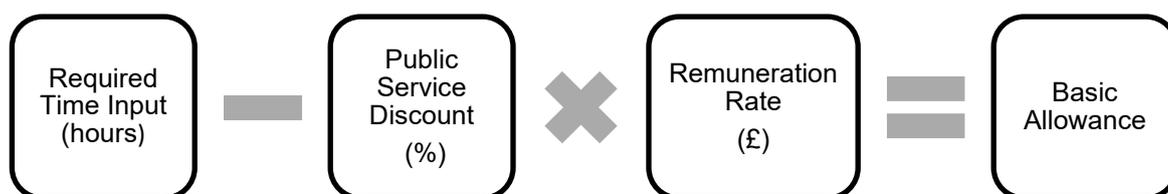
4. CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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.*"³
- 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.⁴ 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.

³ 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.

⁴ 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 a questionnaire 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.⁵

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 **13** 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 recommend a Public Service Discount of **30 per cent** to the calculation of the basic allowance. This percentage sits within the mid-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 used relevant statistics about the local labour market published by the Office for National Statistics. We selected the average (median), full-time gross⁶ wage per hour for the Local Authority area of Bracknell Forest, **£21.46**⁷.

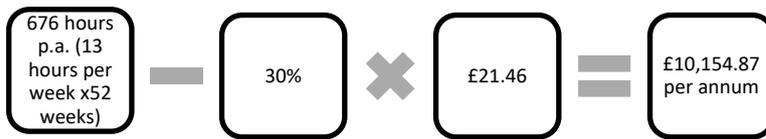
Calculating the basic allowance

4.1.11 After determining the amount of time required each week to fulfil the role (13 hours), the level of PSD to be applied (30%) and the hourly rate to be used (£21.46), we calculated the basic allowance as follows:

⁵ The summary responses to the questionnaires are available on request.

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

⁷ The Nomis official labour market statistics: Hourly Pay – Gross median (£) For full-time employee jobs by place of residence: UK December 2024.



4.1.12 The gross Basic Allowance before the PSD is applied is **£14,506.96**. Following the application of the PSD this leads to a basic allowance of **£10,154.87** 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 unitary councils (see table below and Appendix 3).

Council	South East Unitary Councils: Basic Allowances (£) 2025
Bracknell Forest Council	£9,932
Brighton and Hove City Council	£14,218
Buckinghamshire Council	£13,325
Isle of Wight Council	£10,124
Medway Council	£13,837
Milton Keynes City Council	£12,563
Portsmouth City Council	£13,516
Reading Borough Council	£9,521
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead	£9,348
Slough Borough Council	£9,772
Southampton City Council	£13,900
West Berkshire Council	£8,768
Wokingham Borough Council	£7,784
Average	£11,254

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 Bracknell Forest Council be £10,155 per annum. This allowance is subject to an annual indexation.

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.⁸
- 4.2.3 We conclude from the evidence we have considered that the following offices bear *significant* additional responsibilities:

- Leader of the Council
- Deputy Leader
- Cabinet Member with Portfolio (7)
- Mayor of the Council
- Deputy Mayor of the Council
- Single Minority Group Leader
- Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Commission
- Chair of Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Chair of Environment, Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Chair of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Chair of Employment Committee
- Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee
- Chair of Licensing and Safety Committee
- Vice Chair of Licensing and Safety Committee
- Chair of Planning Committee
- Vice Chair of Planning Committee
- Co-Optees
- Independent Person Code of Conduct Panel
- Independent Person Code of Conduct Panel Reserve

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 customary practice for many councils. Our calculations for the SRAs are based on this principle, which should be highlighted:

⁸ 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.

Calculating SRAs

- 4.2.6 The Panel supports 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.
- 4.2.7 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 twelve tiers of responsibility is discussed below.

Leader of Council (Tier One)

- 4.2.8 The Council elects a Leader who is 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.
- 4.2.9 The multiplier we applied to calculate the Leader's SRA is 330% (3,3 x times) the basic allowance. If the recommended option of a basic allowance with a PSD of 30% is adopted, this results in a Leader's Allowance of £33,512.

WE RECOMMEND that the Leader of the Council receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 330% of the basic allowance, £33,512.

Deputy Leader (Tier Two)

- 4.2.10 The 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 Deputy Leader's SRA be set at 60% 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 £20,107.

WE RECOMMEND that the Deputy Leader receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 60% of the Leader's Allowance, £20,107.

Cabinet Member With Portfolio (Tier Three)

- 4.2.11 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 £18,432, 55% of the Leader's Allowance.
- 4.2.12 Evidence from the interviews we undertook with councillors, underlines the responsibility of the members of the Cabinet for 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 the Cabinet Member with Portfolio receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 55% of the Leader's Allowance, £18,432.

Mayor (Tier Four).

- 4.2.13 The Panel was of the view that the Mayor's role based on the civic contribution and the charring of the Council meetings should now be set at a rate of 40% of the Leader's Allowance, £13,405.

WE RECOMMEND that the Mayor should receive an allowance of 40% of the Leader's Allowance, £13,405.

Single Minority Group Leader (Tier Five)

- 4.2.14 The Panel recognise the importance of the role of the Single Minority Group Leaders in motivating and co-ordinating Group activities, ensuring accountability and constructive challenge of the Cabinet. Since the last review (January 2022) the opposition groups have increased in size and the Panel is of the view that the current approach to calculating the allowance for the Single Minority Group Leaders requires a different approach and formula; and that the current allowances are not commensurate with the requirements and responsibilities of the roles.
- 4.2.15 The Panel is therefore of the view that the allowance for the Single Minority Group Leaders should be based on a per group member rate. This is recommended at £817 per group member. This per member rate is calculated by dividing the recommended Leader's Allowance, £33,512 by the forty-one Council members. This equates to the Leader of the Conservative Group receiving an allowance of £8,170 (10 Members) and the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group receiving an allowance of £5,719 (7Members).
- 4.2.16 The Panel also recommend that for a Minority Group Leader to qualify for this allowance the Group should have at least 15% of total Members in the Group (6 Members).

WE RECOMMEND that the Single Minority Group Leaders Allowance should be based on a per group member rate. This is recommended at £817 per group member. This per member rate to be calculated by dividing the recommended Leader's Allowance, £33,512 by the forty-one Council members. This currently equates to the Leader of the Conservative Group receiving an allowance of £8,170 (10 Members) and the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group receiving an allowance of £5,719 (7 Members).

WE FURTHER RECOMMEND that for a Minority Group Leader to qualify for this allowance the Group should have at least 15% of total Members in the Group (6 Members).

Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Chair of Planning Committee (Tier Six).

- 4.2.17 The Panel is of the view that the role of scrutiny and accountability are a growing and significant role and recent Government Statutory Guidance (2024) promoted the scope and responsibilities of the overview and scrutiny function. The Panel is of the view that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission should receive an allowance of 25% of the Leader's Allowance, £8,378.
- 4.2.18 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 reflect the considerable responsibility undertaken both during and between the committee meetings. We therefore recommend that the role be recognised as a Tier Six allowance and receive an allowance of £8,378, 25% of the Leader's Allowance

WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Chair of the Planning Committee should both receive a Tier Six allowance of 25% of the Leader's Allowance, £8,378.

Chair of the Environment and Communities, Health and Care and Education and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Panels (Tier Seven).

4.2.19 The Panel was of the view that the three Overview and Scrutiny Panels undertake a key role in respect of policy review and development and influencing the decisions of the Cabinet. We recommend that the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels should receive an allowance of 20% of the Leader's Allowance, £6,702.

WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of the Environment and Communities, Health and Care and Education and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Panels receive a Tier Seven Special Responsibility Allowance of 20% of the Leader's Allowance, £6,702.

Chair of the Licensing and Safety Committee (Tier Eight)

4.2.20 The Panel was of the view that the Licensing and Safety Committee Chair continued to be an evolving role based on the frequency of meetings and the changing demands based on the legislative requirements and recommend an allowance of 15% of the Leader's Allowance, £5,027.

4.2.22 The Panel also recommend that the allowance (£497) of the Vice Chair of the Licensing and Safety Committee should be withdrawn.

WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of the Licensing and Safety Committee should receive a Tier Eight allowance of 15% of the Leader's Allowance, £5,027.

WE ALSO RECOMMEND that the allowance for the Vice Chair of the Licensing and Safety Committee should be withdrawn.

Deputy Mayor (Tier Nine)

4.2.23 The Panel was of the view that the Deputy Mayor should receive a Tier Nine Allowance, 33% of the Mayor's Allowance, £4,424.

WE RECOMMEND that the Deputy Mayor should receive an allowance of 33% of the Mayor's Allowance, £4,424.

Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee (Tier Ten)

4.2.24 The Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee continues to undertake a role of responsibility that should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance. The Panel recommends that the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee should receive an allowance of 10% of the Leader's Allowance, £3,351.

WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee should receive an allowance of 15% of the Leader's Allowance, £3,351.

Chair of the Employment Committee (Tier Eleven)

- 4.2.25 The Panel recommend that the role of the Chair of the Employment Committee should continue to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance. The role should receive an allowance of 7.5% of the Leader's Allowance, £2,513.

WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of the Employment Committee receive a Tier Eleven Special Responsibility Allowance of 7.5% of the Leader's Allowance, £2,513.

Vice Chair of the Planning Committees (Tier Twelve)

- 4.2.27 The Panel recommend that the Vice Chair of the Northern Planning Committees should receive an allowance of 20% of the Chair of the Planning Committees, £1,676.

WE RECOMMEND that the Vice Chair of the Planning Committees should receive a Tier Twelve Allowance of 20% of the Chair's Allowance, £1,676.

4.3 Co-Optees' and Independent Persons Allowances

- 4.3.1 An IRP may recommend the payment and level of an allowance for those who serve on the committees or sub-committees of a Council but are not members of the Council. We recognise that in so doing, an element of the contribution made by the co-optees/Independent Persons should be voluntary. We therefore continue to recommend that co-optees of the Council are entitled to an allowance plus travel, subsistence and other expenses in accordance with the scheme applicable to councillors.

WE RECOMMEND that the following Co-optees and Independent Persons should continue to receive the current level of allowances. The role will also receive the annual level of indexation that Councillors receive plus travel, subsistence and other expenses in accordance with the scheme applicable to councillors.

- Co- Optees - £355 per annum.
- Co-Optees Preparing/ Attending Code of Conduct Panels- £69 (up to 4 hours)
- Co- Optees Preparing/Attending Code of Conduct Panels- £139 (over 4 hours)
- Education Appeal Panel Member- £65 (up to 4 hours) and £139 (over 4 hours)
- Independent Member Code of Conduct Panel - £400 per annum.
- Independent Member Code of Conduct Panel Reserve- £200 per annum.

4.4 Travelling and Subsistence Allowance

- 4.4.1 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. Similarly, such an allowance may also be paid to co-opted and Independent 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 any future 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.

4.5 Child Care 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.
- 4.5.2 The Panel is of the view that the Child and Dependant Carers' Allowance should continue to be reimbursed at two rates for basic Childcare and more specialist care. With regards to childcare the Panel now recommends that this should be linked to the *Real Living Wage* as recommended by the *Living Wage Foundation*, currently £13.45 per hour. Regarding more specialist care the Panel is now of the view that this should be reimbursed at 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. This recommended approach will replace the current position that caps any claim to the hourly rate charged by Social Services for a home help carer.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that the Child and Dependant Carers' Allowance should continue to be based on two rates childcare and specialist care. The childcare rate should be linked to the Real Living Wage as recommended by the Living Wage Foundation, currently £13.45 per hour (reviewed on an annual basis). Specialist care should now be reimbursed at cost upon production of receipts and in the case of specialist care a requirement for medical evidence that this type of care be required. The allowance should have no daily or monthly maximum claim when undertaking Approved Councillor Duties.

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

4.6 Parental Leave

- 4.6.1 We are of the view that support should be provided for parental leave although we do wish to stipulate an exact policy/procedure. The Panel was pleased that the Council developed and approved a Parental Leave Policy in September 2024 that was approved by the Cabinet in September 2024.

WE RECOMMEND that a policy on Parental Leave should continue to be adopted for Councillors and should be actively promoted to prospective and current Councillors alongside the Dependants' Carers Allowance to enhance and further 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 Independent Persons / Co-optees allowance to be adjusted annually in line with staff salaries.

WE RECOMMEND that the basic allowance, each of the SRAs and the Independent Persons/ Co-optees' Allowance be increased annually in line with the percentage increase in staff salaries from April 2026 for a period of up to four years. After this period, the Scheme shall be reviewed again by an independent remuneration panel.

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 2026-27 municipal 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 16 of the 41 current councillors (**39% response**). The information obtained was helpful in informing our deliberations.
- 5.1.2 We interviewed *Two*ve current councillors using a structured questioning process. We are grateful to all our interviewees for their assistance.
- 5.1.3 We should also like to thank all the officers within the Democratic Services team for the assistance and support prior to and 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
December 2025.**

Appendix 1: Summary of Panel's Recommendations

Allowance	Current Amount for 2025-26	Number	Recommended Allowance (30% PSD)	Recommended Allowance Calculation
Basic (BA)				
Total Basic:	£9,932	41	£10,155	

Special Responsibility:				
Leader of the Council	£33,101	1	£33,512	330% of BA
Deputy Leader	£19,860	1	£20,107	60% of Leader's Allowance
Cabinet Member with Portfolio	£18,207	7	£18,432	55% of Leader's Allowance
Single Minority Group Leader	£10,857	2	£13,889 total	Per Member rate, £817 per group member
Single Minority Group Deputy Leader	£1,103	2	SRA Withdrawn	
Mayor of the Council	£14,552	1	£13,405	40% of Leader's Allowance
Deputy Mayor of the Council	£4,840	1	£4,424	33% of the Mayor's Allowance
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission	£8,276	1	£8,378	25% of the Leader's Allowance
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Panels	£6,620	3	£6,702	20% of the Leader's Allowance
Chair of the Planning Committee	£8,276	1	£8,378	25% of Leader's Allowance
Vice Chair of the Planning Committee	£828	1	£1,676	20% of Chair's Allowance
Chair of the Employment Committee	£2,516	1	£2,513	7.5% of Leader's Allowance
Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee	£3,310	1	£3,351	10% of the Leader's Allowance
Chair of the Licensing and Safety Committee	£4,964	1	£5,027	15% of the Leader's Allowance
Vice Chair of the Licensing and Safety Committee	£497	1	SRA Withdrawn	
Co-Optees'	£355		£355	Indexation
Co-Optees' Preparing/ Attending Code of Conduct Panels	£69 £139		£69 £139	Per meeting up to 4 hours and over 4 hours

Allowance	Current Amount for 2025-26	Number	Recommended Allowance (30% PSD)	Recommended Allowance Calculation
Education Appeal Panel Member	£65 £129		£65 £129	Per meeting up to 4 hours and over 4 hours
Independent Person Code of Conduct Panel	£400		£400	
Independent Person Code of Conduct Panel-Reserve	£200		£200	