

Report to COUNCIL

Members' Allowances Scheme 2025/2026

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12 November 2025

Reason for Decision

The Council is required to determine a Scheme for Members' Allowances following consideration of a report of an Independent Remuneration Panel convened in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

Executive Summary

On 24 April 2025, the Independent Remuneration Panel met to consider a review of the Members' Allowances Scheme which involved looking at benchmarking data from other local authorities and changes within the political arrangements of the council. The Panel also considered proposals to amend the allowance for Independent Members/Persons appointed to the Audit Committee and Standards Committee.

The Panel further met on 21 August 2025, as a result of a review of Members' allowances which was instructed by the Chief Executive, the outcome of which has been subject to a separate report to the Audit Committee. Whilst the investigation outcome is outside the remit of the Remuneration Panel, the Panel were asked to consider the impact in relation to basic allowance and special responsibility allowances, as their previous recommendations were based on incorrect information, which is the reason why the Panel's original report was not presented to the July Council meeting.

Whilst the Council has a duty to have regard to the Panel's recommendations, it is the Council's choice whether to accept the Panel's recommendations in whole or in part, or not at all, or to determine any other scheme for 2025/2026.

Recommendations

It is recommended:

1. That Council considers the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, and its recommendations, as set out in Appendix 1, and adopts the scheme of allowances as set out in Appendix 2 for the municipal year 2025/26, effective from 1 April 2025.
2. That Council delegates authority to the Assistant Director of Governance in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Director of Legal (Monitoring Officer) to:
 - (i) take all necessary action to implement 1 above;
 - (ii) update the constitution;
 - (iii) to establish an Independent Remuneration Panel to review the scheme of allowances for implementation of the revised scheme from April 2026.
3. That the Independent Remuneration Panel be thanked for its report.

Members Allowance Scheme 2025/2026

1 Background

- 1.1 Section 18 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 permits the Secretary of State, by regulations, to make a scheme providing for the payment of a basic allowance, an attendance allowance and a special responsibility allowance to members of a local authority. Section 100 of the Local Government Act 2000 permits the Secretary of State, by regulations, to provide for travelling and subsistence allowances for members of local authorities, allowances for attending conferences and meetings and reimbursement of expenses. In exercise of these powers the Secretary of State has made the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.
- 1.2 The Members Allowances Scheme for 2025/26 requires to be approved by Council. The Independent Remuneration Panel have considered the scheme, and their report and recommendations are contained at Appendix 1. Other aspects of the Scheme are unchanged (detailed in Appendix 2).

2 Current Position

- 2.1 The Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) has met to review the current Members' Allowances Scheme. The Panel were asked to consider the impact of the review in relation to basic allowance and special responsibility allowances, as their previous recommendations were based on incorrect rates being applied to basic allowance. The Panel's report on the recommended levels of the allowance payments for the 2025/2026 financial year, and other proposed changes to the scheme, is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Prior to adopting a scheme or amending a scheme the Council must consider a report produced by an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) unless it is the simple application of an index. This index can be applied for a maximum of 4 years at which time the scheme would require further consideration by the IRP and a new scheme adopted by the council.
- 2.3 Whilst the Council has a duty to have regard to the Panel's recommendations, it is the Council's choice whether to accept the Panel's recommendations in whole or in part, or not at all, or to determine any other scheme for 2025/2026.
- 2.4 The Council last considered a report of the IRP at the meeting on 13 March 2024 and adopted a scheme of allowances. Members are requested to consider and decide on the scheme and allowances detailed at Appendix 2, based on the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel.
- 2.5 The Scheme for future years will be presented at the budget meeting of the full council so that appropriate provision can be made.

3 Options/Alternatives

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory duty to support an independent review of its Members' Allowances scheme. It is considered good practice to reconvene an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) periodically ahead of a future fundamental review of the members allowance scheme in part or full.

4 Preferred Option

- 4.1 To give due consideration to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel consulted the Group Leader of the Administration, the Group Leaders of the two Main Opposition Groups and the Group Leader of the Minority Opposition at its April meeting.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The proposals recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel within this report can be met from within the existing revenue base budget provision for Members Allowances.

Vickie Lambert

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Council is required to approve a Members Allowances Scheme.

8 Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People

- 8.1 Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- 8.2 Protected characteristics: age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to marriage & civil partnership.
- 8.3 Although it does not directly relate to protected groups, the draft scheme contains the ability to pay a dependent carers allowance to Councillors. This contributes to aims 1 and 2 of the Equality Act as it removes barriers to Councillors standing who have relatives that may be in need of dependent care.

9 **Key Decision**

9.1 No. Decision for the full council.

10 **Key Decision Reference**

10.1 N/A

11 **Background Papers**

11.1 The following is a list of background papers on which this report is based in accordance with the requirements of Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. It does not include documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information as defined by the Act:

Members' allowances file

12 **Appendices**

12.1 Appendix 1: Independent Remuneration Panel report and allowances recommendations

Appendix 2: Members Scheme