

Sunderland City Council

This Notice is published in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003

At its meeting on 25th January 2023, the Council considered recommendations from its Independent Remuneration Panel in respect of the Allowances Scheme for 2023/2024 and the amendment of its Scheme for 2022/2023. The Panel recommended that in respect of the Scheme for 2023/2024 the basic allowance be increased to £8995, the allowance for Chair of Planning and Highways Committee be increased to £8369 and an allowance for the Planning and Highways Committee Vice Chair be set at £4184. The Panel also recommended that the 2022/2023 Scheme be amended to reflect the changes in allowances for the Chair and Vice Chair of Planning and Highways Committee and the amendment be backdated to the date of appointment to those positions. The Council accepted the recommendations regarding the Planning and Highways Committee but resolved to leave the basic allowance unchanged. The main provisions of the Scheme adopted for 2023/2024 are summarised below.

Type of Allowance	Amount per annum £
Basic Allowance	8,369
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	8,369

Vice Chair of the following:

Area Committee	6,277
Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee	6,277
Licensing and Regulatory Committee	4,184
Planning and Highways Committee	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

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

Telephone Calls Allowance £15 per quarter

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 of the facility.

Copies of the Independent Remuneration Panel's report can be inspected at City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland SR1 3AA (the Council's principal office) during office hours.

Copies are available free of charge.

The report can also be viewed on the Council's website www.sunderland.gov.uk

Patrick Melia
Chief Executive
Sunderland City Council

30 May 2023

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES – AMENDMENT OF SCHEME FOR 2022/2023 AND ADOPTION OF SCHEME FOR 2023/2024

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise Council of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, in respect of amendments to the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2022/2023 and adoption of a Scheme for 2023/2024.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, 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 amending the current Scheme for 2022/2023 and backdating the proposed amendments, and also for adopting a Scheme for the financial year 2023/2024.

3. Review of the Schemes for 2022/2023 and 2023/2024

- 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 the Leader of the Council and one of the opposition group leaders. No written representations were received from the wider Council membership.
- 3.3 The Panel was informed of a change that had been made to the Council's committee structure with effect from the Annual Council Meeting in May 2022, namely the merger of the two Planning and Highways Committees (East and West) into one city-wide Planning and Highways Committee. In the circumstances, the Panel considered it appropriate to review the allowance awarded to the role of Chair of the Planning and Highways Committee and to consider the position of Vice Chair. In this regard, in order to better understand the roles and responsibilities of the two

positions, the Panel found it helpful to meet with the Committee Chair, as well as to hear from the Leader of the Council on this matter, as the Leader is also the current holder of the position of Vice Chair of the Committee.

- 3.4 The Panel was also advised that at the Annual Council meeting in May 2022, no appointments were made to the Adoption and Fostering Panels. The Council had been informed at its Annual Meeting that the regulation and inspection of both adoption and fostering services sit separately from Children's Services and that they have their own Ofsted judgments. There is no requirement for the Council to nominate elected members to the Panels and in order to maintain ongoing assurance to the Council, performance reports are provided to various Council meetings. In addition, the Regional Adoption Agency Head of Service attends Scrutiny Committee to provide a full update on outcomes.

4. Submissions received from Group Leaders

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 With regard to the position of Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning and Highways Committee, the Leader suggested that the roles and responsibilities of these positions were comparable to those of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee and requested that the Panel consider recommending setting the allowances at the same levels.

- 4.2.2 The Panel referred the Leader to previous reviews which had recommended that the Council increase the basic allowance paid to councillors and observed that these recommendations had not been accepted. The Leader advised the Panel that the Labour group did not consider it appropriate to implement an increase at this time, in view of the cost-of-living pressures faced by residents of the City.

4.3 Summary of Submissions made by Opposition Group Leader

- 4.3.1 Written and verbal submissions were received from one of the opposition group leaders, which were in line with submissions they had submitted in the course of previous reviews, to the effect that the number of SRAs awarded and the amounts paid were too high. The submissions were 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 increase for opposition SRAs.
 - While acknowledging cost of living pressures, there should not be any increase in basic allowance. If this was considered necessary, Special Responsibility Allowances should be reduced to pay for this.
- 4.3.2 On this occasion, reference was also made to the Council being at the early stages of a review by the Local Government Boundary Commission and it was submitted that the Council should request the Panel to undertake an in-depth review of roles and responsibilities in the very near future.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.1 As was observed in the last review, a number of the Opposition submissions have been made to the Panel in the course of previous reviews and while the Panel would be open to revisiting the allowances concerned should circumstances change, it did not consider that there was any need to reduce the number or level of allowances on this occasion.
- 5.2 The Panel has previously recommended an uplift in the basic allowance, which it is mindful has not been increased for a number of years. This recommendation was not accepted by the Council following the last review and it appeared clear from the submissions received as part of the current review, that any such recommendation was unlikely to be approved by the Council on this occasion. Nevertheless, the Panel wishes to acknowledge that cost of living pressures impact on councillors as well as other residents and it would suggest to the Council that care should be taken to ensure that the level of allowance is not so low as to discourage individuals from a wide cross section of society from seeking to become councillors. While it appears likely that the Council will decline to increase the basic allowance,

nevertheless, the Panel remains of the view that this is an appropriate recommendation to make.

- 5.3 As stated in the Panel report for 2022/2023, 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 most recent pay award, which was implemented during 2022/2023, was a flat rate payment and therefore for staff at different salary bands, this represented a different percentage increase in their salary. The Panel considers that applying an increase of 7% to the basic allowance, which would take it to £8,995, would represent an amount approximately equivalent to the total increase in staff salaries.
- 5.4 With regard to the positions of Chair and Vice Chair of Planning and Highways Committee, the Panel considered that the associated roles and responsibilities were comparable to those of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee, another regulatory “quasi-judicial” committee within the Council. The Panel therefore recommends that the Chair and Vice-Chair are awarded the same level of allowance as that awarded to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee, namely £8,369 and £4,184 respectively. As the single Planning and Highways Committee was created with effect from Annual Council 2022, the Panel recommends that in addition to including this provision in the Scheme for 2023/2024, the Scheme for the current year is amended to provide for these allowances and that the amendment is backdated, so as to come into effect from the date on which the appointment of Chair and Vice Chair of the single Planning and Highways Committee took effect. For the avoidance of doubt, it is recommended that the allowances paid in respect of the Chairs of the former Planning and Highways Committees (East and West), prior to the creation of the single Planning and Highways Committee, remain unchanged.
- 5.5 In addition, while it is recommended that the amendment to the allowances paid to the Chair and Vice Chair in the current year are backdated, the Panel notes that the position of Vice Chair is currently held by the Leader of the Council who, being already in receipt of a special responsibility allowance in respect of the role of Leader, is unable to claim two special responsibility allowances.

- 5.6 As the Council is not nominating members to the Adoption and Fostering Panels at this time, the Panel recommends that the associated allowances should be removed from the Scheme, but the Panel would be happy to reconsider the position, should the Council change its approach.
- 5.7 With regard to the Boundary Commission Review, as this is at an early stage, it is not yet known what, if any, changes to Council size and ward boundaries will be implemented and how this may in turn impact on the Council's governance structure. Any such changes will be taken into account, as appropriate, in the course of future reviews.
- 5.8 At a previous review, the Panel received information regarding the potential creation of a Cabinet position for a "Green" portfolio. The Panel was informed that in the event, the Leader had determined that this portfolio responsibility should fall within the remit of the Deputy Leader. While no submissions were received on this occasion regarding any proposed portfolio changes, for completeness, the Panel wishes to reiterate its previous view that it would be supportive, as an interim position, of a separate portfolio regarding the "Green" agenda 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 portfolio holder at the following review, regarding the associated demands and responsibilities of the role. Should a deputy be appointed to such a portfolio, the Panel again recommends that no allowance be attached to the deputy position, until the Panel has had the opportunity to hear evidence regarding the responsibilities associated with the post.
- 5.9 The Panel recommends to the Council the proposals set out in this report which are in summary:
- 5.9.1 With regard to the Scheme for 2022/2023
- 5.9.1.1 To amend the Scheme to provide for the award of allowances to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning and Highways Committee of £8,369 and £4,184 respectively, such amendment to be backdated so as to take effect from the date from which the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair took effect and for the avoidance of doubt, that the provisions of the Scheme for 2022/2023 in respect of the payment of allowances in respect of the Chairs of the former Planning and Highways (East) Committee and Planning and Highways (West) Committee, remain unchanged.
- 5.9.2 With regard to the Scheme for 2023/2024

- 5.9.2.1 To include provision for the allowances for the Chair and Vice Chair of Planning and Highways Committee, as referred to above, in the amounts of £8,369 and £4,184 respectively
- 5.9.2.2 To increase the level of basic allowance to £8995
- 5.9.2.3 To remove provision for allowances to be paid for membership of the Adoption Panels and Fostering Panels
- 5.9.2.4 Other than as referred to above, the Scheme for 2023/2024 to remain unchanged from the current Scheme.
- 5.9.3 The Panel's recommendations regarding the allowances for 2023/ 2024 are summarised in the Appendix to this report.
- 5.10 The Panel wishes to express its thanks to those who have contributed to this review.

John Anderson CBE
Karen Straughair
Stuart Green

December 2022

Appendix

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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

