



INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Interim Report

An Interim Review of Members' Allowances for
Havant Borough Council

November 2021

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel was convened to undertake an interim review of Members' Allowances. The review was undertaken, and the Panel convened, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 2003 No.1021).

1.2 The Panel met 10 times between 1 September and 17 November 2021.

Membership of the Panel was:

Andrew Kirk, Peter Moore and David Heck.

1.3 We interviewed 6 Members and 2 Officers. These included the Leader, Chairmen of the newly formed committees, the Lead Councillor for the previous review of Members Remuneration Panel, Chief Executive and S151 Chief Finance Officer.

1.4 The Panel would like to thank the Members and Officers who we interviewed during the process. We have taken account of the views expressed to us by those Members and Officers, and would like to thank them for their assistance in this review.

1.5 Additionally, the Panel was assisted and supported throughout by Daniel Toohey (Monitoring Officer), Jenni Harding (Democratic Services Team Leader), Lydia Merriman (Democratic Services Officer), Lauren Kennedy (Democratic Services Officer) and Mark Gregory (Democratic Services Officer).

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The IRP makes the following recommendations:

- (a) the Councillors' Allowances Scheme be amended to include the following SRAs:
 - Chairman of the Standards Committee - £3871
 - Chairman of the Audit and Finance Committee - £5692
 - Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee - £5692
 - Chairman of the Planning Policy Committee - £5237
 - Assistant to a Cabinet Member - £2505
- (b) the additional or adjusted SRAs recommended in 2.1(a) above be backdated to the beginning of the municipal (financial) year 2021/22.
- (c) the increase in the Leader's Allowance due to come into effect from 1 April 2022 should not lead to an increase in the other SRAs (including the SRAs recommended at 2.1(a) above).
- (d) all SRAs including those recommended at 2.1(a) above be increased each year from 1 April 2022 in line with any NJC increase.
- (e) In relation to the basic allowance:

- That there be no change to the members allowance scheme in relation to the Basic Allowance
- To be clear, that the Basic Allowance still be increased in line with any NJC increase each year from 1 April 2020/21

3.0 Associated Documents

3.1 This report should be read in conjunction with the “Background Papers” used by the Panel. These are published online in a separate document entitled “Background Papers to the Review of Members’ Allowances for Havant Borough Council” and may be viewed using the following link:

[Background Papers](#)

4 Terms of Reference

4.1 Our terms of reference were to undertake an interim review of the existing Councillors’ Allowances Scheme in response to the changes to governance and decision-making structures in the Councils’ adopted constitution. Specifically, this was an assessment of the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) and to make recommendations as to the level of allowances for the following roles:

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair
- The Audit and Finance Committee Chair
- The Standards Committee Chair
- The Planning Policy Committee Chair
- Assistants to Cabinet Leads

4.2 The Panel was also asked to consider whether the current basic allowance paid to all councillors was adequate.

4.3 The Panel was established in accordance with section 99 of the Local Government Act 2000.

5. Methodology

5.1 The Panel met in September, October and November 2021. Panel meetings were held in private sessions to enable the Panel to interview Members in confidence, prior to which answers were sought to a number of brief questions.

5.2 The Panel followed the statutory guidance relating to the Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs).

5.3 The Panel was satisfied that this scheme has produced a hierarchy of SRA roles based on the responsibilities, skills and workloads of each SRA post, which is free from discrimination and perception and provides a fair system, which can be used to evaluate any new SRAs or changes to existing SRAs. Full details of the scheme, relevant documents and final score sheet are included in the background papers.

5.4 The Panel's activity fell into 7 parts:

(a) Review of background information

This included, the current Councillors' Allowances Scheme, key documents relating to the previous Councillor Allowances Review, and details of the background to the Special Responsibilities Allowances ("SRAs") and changes made to these SRAs over previous reviews, the number of meetings held, allowances paid in comparator authorities and copies of the regulations and statutory guidance. A full list of information considered by the Panel is reiterated in the background papers.

(b) Benchmarking survey

A benchmarking exercise was undertaken to find out whether Havant Borough Council's allowances had fallen behind that paid by peer authorities. The Panel considered the methodology adopted by a wide range of local authorities in the South East region. The Panel also looked closely at the processes in similar sized local authorities.

The results of this exercise are set out in the background papers.

(c) Members' Survey

A survey of Members was undertaken to find out their views on the current scheme. The panel wishes to thank Members for their time in responding. 75% of Council submitted a response.

(d) Meeting with the Leader of the Council

The Panel wished to gain an insight into the role and responsibilities of the new SRAs and the Leader's view on the current scheme.

(e) Meetings with other Members

The Panel wished to gain an insight into the roles and responsibilities of their roles, the subject of the review and of other Members and Chairmen.

(f) Interviews with the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services & Section 151 Officer and consultation with the Monitoring Officer

To discuss the legal and financial implications of the proposed recommendations.

(g) Arriving at recommendations

When making its recommendations, the Panel considered all the information gathered from the activities referred to in 5.5 (a) to (f) above

6. Principles of the Review

6.1 Before the Panel arrived at its recommendations, it decided that its deliberations should be underpinned by the following principles; namely that:

- (i) the recommendations would seek to minimise barriers to public service without allowances becoming a motivating factor in serving the Council;

- (ii) the recommendations should be based on a transparent and logical construct that is understandable and justifiable;
 - (iii) all recommendations should be based on evidence;
 - (iv) any Councillors' Allowances Scheme recommended should be simple to administer; and
 - (v) recommendations should seek to reflect the responsibilities, skills and workload held by Members in Havant Borough Council.
- 6.2 As noted in the preamble, the Panel has sought to address the SRAs within the present financial and local framework.
- 6.3 The Panel has set out its deliberations in this report to assist Members and the public to understand its approach. The Panel has considered the worth of Members' roles and at the same time the issues of public perception and affordability. While the Panel's recommendations are not mandatory, it is hoped that if the Council disagrees with the actual figures recommended that it would accept the Panel's logic. The recommendations presented in this report at the present, represent the views of the Panel and not the official view of Havant Borough Council.

The Evidence Considered

7. Key Messages and Observations

7.1 The Issue of Member Performance

7.1.1 The issue of Member performance is often raised when undertaking a review of the Councillors' Allowances Scheme. Ultimately, the final arbiter on Member performance is the electorate, with the group system acting as the intermediate influence. The arbiters for the performance of the SRA holders are the person and/or body responsible for appointing the members to these posts i.e. the Leader of the Council and Council.

7.2 Members and Recognition, they are "Doing More with Less"

7.2.1 While the Council is seeking further savings in expenditure, it does not mean Members are doing less. Indeed, as it was pointed out to the Panel, due to the increase in the use of social media and public awareness, there is more of a sense of immediacy and responsiveness in their roles. The Council continues to address the range of issues that affect all councils. This has increasingly meant an enhanced partnership working that accompanies this agenda, particularly affecting senior Members. Indeed, it also affects the top tier of management as Havant Borough Council now has a shared Chief Executive and Executive Paid Officers with East Hampshire District Council. This sharing of senior Officers has reduced the top three tiers of management in both.

7.3 The Role of the Panel and Current Economic Context

7.3.1 The prime role of the Panel is to assess what it judges the roles and posts under review are worth, based on the evaluation of the evidence. Against that, the Panel has to be aware of the current economic climate both generally, where many residents of Havant Borough Council are facing an uncertain economic future and internally, where the Council is seeking further efficiencies.

- 7.3.2 This has led the Panel to take the view that it would be reluctant to significantly increase the total spend on allowances, and even a marginal increase in total spend would require strong evidence for the Panel to make such a recommendation.
- 7.3.3 On the other hand, the economic context has to be balanced against the demands that continue to be placed upon Members who cannot be expected to undertake the roles required of them on a totally voluntary basis – unless by individual choice. It is unrealistic not to at least provide a degree of support and recognition through the Councillors’ Allowances Scheme to ensure proper democratic representation and fulfilment of the duties that they are required to carry out.

7.4 Appeal of the Allowances

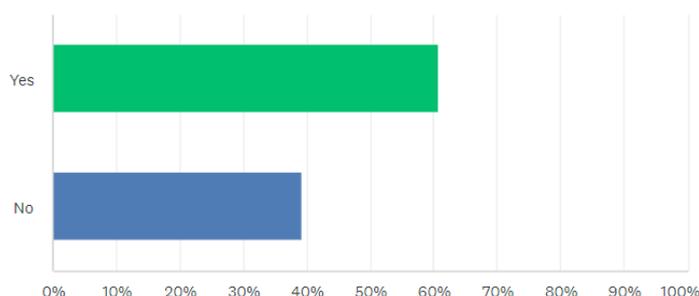
7.4.1 The 2018 review had established that although allowances are important and an emotive issue, the level of these allowances were not the driving force in becoming a Member or an SRA post holder. This Panel continues to support this view. Indeed, our findings show that newly elected members are not fully aware of the allowances structure, be it a basic allowance or a SRA. In perhaps equal measure, the Panel also found Members were surprised at the amount of work and commitment that comes with being a Councillor.

7.5 A Robust Scheme

7.5.1 The Panel has had an opportunity to view the scheme of allowances which is due to come into effect from 1 April 2022. Although the members’ survey revealed that not all members were happy with the basic allowance, 60% of the respondents considered that the current scheme was “fair”. Therefore, taking all of the information at hand into account, the Panel considered that the method of calculating the scheme and allowances was sound, robust, and transparent. Apart from the changes introduced following the review of the Constitution, no significant changes have been brought to the attention of the Panel to make it wish to recommend any changes to the proposed and current schemes.

Do you feel that the current Councillor's Allowance Scheme is fair?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	60.71% 17
No	39.29% 11
Total Respondents: 28	

7.5.2 The current scheme includes a method for calculating SRAs which was originally introduced in 2018. Although the Panel is not obliged to use this scheme, it decided to adopt, as it would be consistent with previous valuations and produces a robust and transparent scheme for calculating SRAs.

8.0 Arriving at the New SRAs

8.1 In arriving at the new SRAs the Panel took cognisance of the 2003 Statutory Guidance (paragraph 76) which states:

A good starting point in determining special responsibility allowances may be to agree the allowance which should be attached to the most time-consuming post on the Council (this maybe the elected mayor or the leader) and pro rata downwards for the other roles which it has agreed ought to receive an extra allowance.

8.2 This approach assesses the Leader's post (SRA) as 100% and relates all other posts as a percentage of the Leader's SRA, e.g., 70%, 60%, 50%, 40% and so on. The advantages of this approach are that the Panel is able to maintain current differentials between SRAs (unless in any particular case there is reason to alter a differential), is transparent and relatively simple to understand, as it assesses posts in a hierarchical fashion based on the Council's political structure.

The pro rata approach simply expresses the current differentials, and the main issue is to consider if there is a case to alter them. Generally, where a Havant post holder receives a comparatively high SRA, then the IRP has rounded it downwards and rounded it up where an SRA is comparatively low.

8.3 The Panel is content that the increase in the Leader's Allowance due to come into effect from 1 April 2022 should not lead to an increase in the other SRAs (including the SRAs recommended in this report) but the differentials for the Councillors' Allowances Scheme should be amended to accommodate the increase in the Leader's Allowance.

8.4 Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8.4.1 The Council has reduced the number of scrutiny committees from three to one principal Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which now has broad terms of reference as follows:

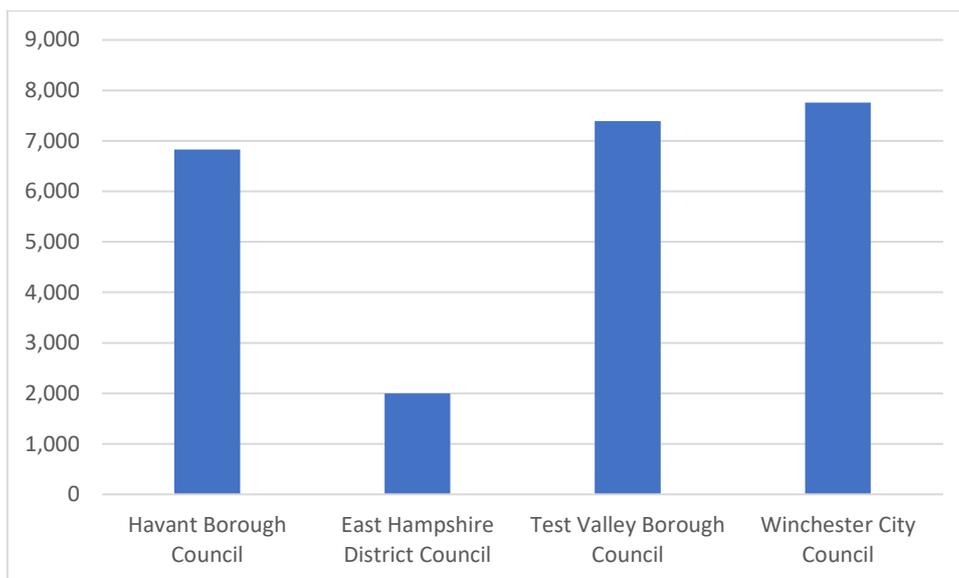
- It will hold the Cabinet to account by reviewing and scrutinising executive decisions
- Reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives and performance targets
- Exercise the right to Call-In for reconsideration of decisions made but not yet implemented by the Leader, the Cabinet and Cabinet Leads and Officers.

8.4.2 Previously the two chairmen of the Scrutiny Boards each received an SRA of £5,692, which equated to 38% of the Leader's SRA.

8.4.3 Previous reviews consciously recommended relatively high SRAs for the Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees as a reflection of the central importance the government provides for scrutiny in the post-2000 local government political structures. Furthermore, there is the assumption that the Scrutiny Chairmen take a leading role in the assorted sub-groups and task and finish working groups that arise in the work programme of each Scrutiny Committee – a practice that continues in Havant.

8.4.4 The Evaluation Exercise found that the current allowance for this role should remain unchanged at £5692.

8.4.5 In terms of benchmarking this allowance continues to sit between the mean and median averages of these council sits between the mean and median averages of the benchmarked Councils..



8.4.6 The Panel acknowledge that the review of the constitution has resulted in the amalgamation of all the scrutiny functions into a single scrutiny committee. However, it does not consider that these changes should lead to an increase in the allowance of the Chairman of this Committee as the Council's Committee Calendar does not anticipate that this change will result in more meetings than would be expected for a scrutiny committee and, based on the information provided, there has not been a significant increase in the duration of the meetings of the new Committee. It is also assumed that some of the additional work arising from the constitutional review will be passed to the assorted sub-groups and task and finish working groups created by the Committee.

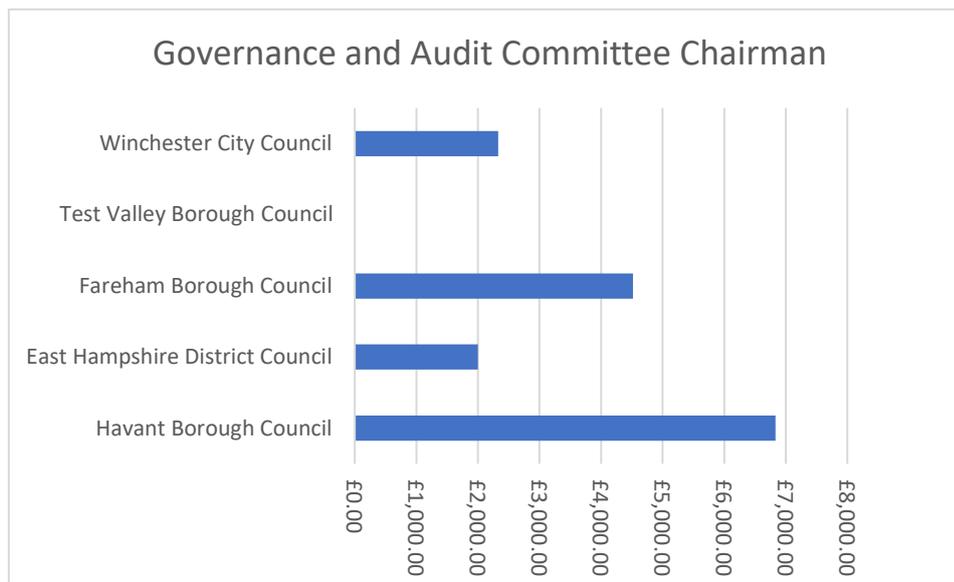
8.4.7 In conclusion the Panel is satisfied that a SRA of £5692 for the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reflects the roles, responsibilities and workload of this post, is comparable with similar SRAs paid by the benchmarked Councils and is in keeping with other SRAs adopted by the Council.

8.4.8 **Recommendation:** That the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to receive an SRA of £5692 which represents 38% of the Leader's current allowance (32% from 1 April 2022).

8.5 Chairman of the Audit and Finance Committee

8.5.1 Prior to the constitutional review, the Council had a Governance, Audit and Finance Board, which attracted a higher SRA of £6831 because the Board had a multitude of functions including audit, finance, governance, and scrutiny. This is no longer the case.

8.5.2 In respect of the benchmark councils the size and scope of other councils' audit and governance committees is much smaller, which explains why the previous SRA for the Chairman was higher than the mean and median averages across the benchmark councils.



8.5.3 A re-evaluation of this role has reduced the allowance to £5692, which reflects the loss of its scrutiny and some of its governance functions. Although this allowance is higher than the mean and median averages for the benchmark councils, the Panel is satisfied that the evaluation exercise accurately reflects the responsibilities and skills needed for the role.

8.5.4 The Panel is satisfied that the roles and responsibilities of these two chairmen are comparable in importance and this SRA will not be out of keeping with the current and other proposed SRAs.

8.5.5 In conclusion the Panel is satisfied that a SRA of £5692 for the Chairman of the Audit and Finance Committee reflects the roles, responsibilities and workload of this post, although higher than the similar SRAs paid by the benchmarked Councils, it is in keeping with other SRAs adopted by the Council.

8.5.6 **The Panel recommends that:** The SRA for the Chairman of the Audit and Finance Committee be £5692 which represents 38% of the Leader's Allowance (32% from 1 April 2022).

8.6 Chairman of the Standards Committee

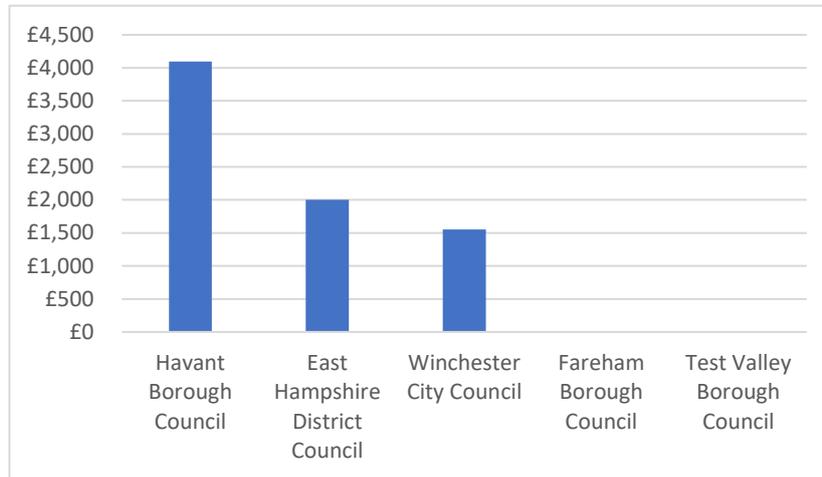
8.6.1 Following the constitutional review, the Council established a Standards Committee, which has the following broad terms of reference:

- Consider complaints that a councillor has failed to comply with the code of conduct adopted by the Council and to determine whether or not those complaints should be investigated
- Make arrangements under which Members' conduct can be investigated
- Make arrangements under which decisions on allegations about Members' conduct can be made, following the completion of an investigation.
- To consider amendments to the Constitution and recommend proposals to Full Council for approval, except where specifically delegated to the Monitoring Officer.

8.6.2 The Standards Committee at the time of this interim review had only met on two occasions and is growing into its role. That said, should the terms of reference be realised and met,

the committee has the potential to make a significant impact and play a major role in the conduct of Councillors and the operation of the Council through its Constitution.

- 8.6.3 An evaluation of this new role found that it attracted a SRA of £3871. Although this allowance is higher than the mean (£2474) and median averages (£2000) for the benchmark councils, the Panel is satisfied that the evaluation exercise accurately reflects the responsibilities and skills needed for the Chairman of a committee that plays an important role in the functioning of the Council and is not out of keeping with the current and other proposed SRAs.



- 8.6.4 In conclusion the Panel is satisfied that a SRA of £3871 for the Chairman of the Standards Committee reflects the roles, responsibilities and workload of this post, and although higher than similar SRAs paid by the benchmarked Councils, it is in keeping with other SRAs adopted by the Council.

- 8.6.5 **The Panel recommends that:** The SRA for the Chairman of the Standards Committee be £3781, which represents 26% of the Leader's Allowance (22% from 1 April 2022).

8.7 Chairman of the Planning Policy Committee

- 8.7.1 Following the constitutional review, the Council established a Planning Policy Committee, which considers planning policy matters and makes recommendations to Planning Committee, Cabinet or Council, as appropriate on planning policy issues, particularly in connection with the Havant Local Plan.

- 8.7.2 This Committee is a new innovation and at the time of this interim review had only met on two occasions and based on the interview with the Chairman, it was developing its approach in the first few months of operation. That said, should the terms of reference be realised and met, the committee has the potential to make a significant impact and play a major role in policy development; and assisting the Council Leader and Cabinet Members in respect of policy analysis, research and achieving better outcomes in relation to the Council's strategy. The role of the Chair will be pivotal to the success of this Policy Committee.

- 8.7.3 An evaluation of this new role found that it attracted a SRA of £5237. The uniqueness of the role of Policy Committee means that we have only East Hampshire District Council to compare with. Although this allowance is higher than the SRA granted by East Hampshire District Council (£2,000) the Panel is satisfied that the evaluation exercise accurately reflects the responsibilities and skills needed for the chairman of a committee that will play an important role in the development of planning policy for the Borough.

- 8.7.4 The Panel considered in detail whether the SRA for this post should be higher than the Chairman of the Planning Committee and concluded that due to the extra responsibilities

of the Chairman, in relation to the Committee's work plan and its role in shaping policy, a slightly higher allowance was justifiable.

8.7.5 In conclusion the Panel is satisfied that a SRA of £5237 for the Chairman of the Planning Policy Committee reflects the roles, responsibilities and workload of this post, should be higher than similar SRAs paid by the Benchmarked Councils and is in keeping with other SRAs adopted by the Council.

8.7.6 **The Panel recommends that:** The SRA for the Chairman of the Planning Policy Committee be £5237 which represents 35% of the Leader's Allowance (29% from 1 April 2022)

8.8 Assistants to Cabinet Leads

8.8.1 The Leader established assistants to Cabinet Members to assist a Cabinet Lead to champion, develop and implement the Council policies, strategies and service delivery within the portfolio of the Cabinet Lead to whom they are assigned.

8.8.2 This post is a new innovation and at the time of this interim review, the holders of this post are growing into their new roles. That said, should the terms of reference be realised and met, the post holders have the potential to make a significant impact and play a major role in policy development; and assisting the Council Leader and Cabinet Members in respect of policy analysis, research and achieving better outcomes in relation to the Council Strategy and the day to day running of the Council.

8.8.3 The uniqueness of this role means that we have only East Hampshire District Council to compare with.

8.8.4 An evaluation of this new role found that it attracted an SRA of £2505, which is slightly lower than the SRA granted by East Hampshire District Council (£3,000). The Panel is satisfied that the evaluation exercise accurately reflects the responsibilities and skills needed for the post of Assistant to a Cabinet Lead who will play an important role in supporting the Cabinet Lead in the development of policy for the Borough and in the day to day running of the Council. The Panel also considers that the proposed SRA will attract more members to a role in the Council's Executive, thereby making the executive arrangements more resilient.

8.8.5 The Panel is satisfied that this position reflects the roles and responsibilities of the post in relation to the other SRA posts

8.8.6 **The Panel recommends that:** The SRA for the role of Assistant to a Cabinet Lead be £2505, which represents 17% of the Leader's Allowance (14% from 1 April 2022)

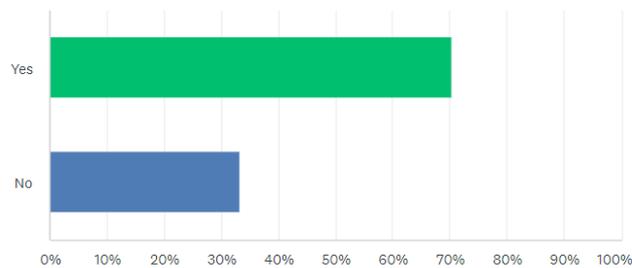
9.0 Basic Allowance

9.1 Testing the Basic Allowance

9.1.1 In view of the fact that 75% of the Members (28 Members) indicated in the survey that there was an appetite for increasing the basic allowance, the Panel decided to revisit the original variables to test whether they were still appropriate. It recalibrated the original formula utilised to establish whether the current Basic Allowance was still valid and how robust it remains.

Do you feel there is appetite currently amongst members to support an increase in the current Councillor's Allowance Scheme?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	70.37% 19
No	33.33% 9
Total Respondents: 27	

9.2 Principles for the testing of the Basic Allowance

9.2.1 The Panel noted that in January of this year, the Council rejected a proposal by an Independent Review Panel and supported its own review that it should not increase the basic allowance above the rate of increase in staff salaries. In view of this decision, the Panel considered that any change in the basic allowance, above the agreed index link increase, could only be justified if there has been any significant change since January this year.

9.3 Statutory Guidance

9.3.1 The Panel took into account the statutory guidance to which it must pay regard, before arriving at its recommendations. In particular, the Panel was made aware that the authority's scheme of allowances must include provision for a Basic Allowance that is payable at an equal flat rate to all Members. The statutory guidance on arriving at the Basic Allowances further 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.¹

9.3.2 The Panel based its underlying approach to setting the recommended Basic Allowance on the statutory guidance and the Inland Revenue and Customs (HMIR&C, par. 67). Based on the above statutory guidance the Panel was under a duty to arrive at answers for the following three variables:²

- * What time is necessary to fulfil the role of the ordinary Member?
- * What amount of that time should be viewed as given as public service, known as the public service discount (PSD)?
- * At what rate of pay should be the remunerated hours?

¹ Department of Communities and Local Government and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, par 67

² See *Consolidated Guidance* July 2003 paragraphs 68-69 for further details.

9.4 Changes Made to the Basic Allowance Following the 2018 Review

- 9.4.1 The 2018 Review recommended that the payment of £461 per year given to all Members in recognition of the out-of-pocket expenses Councillors incur for telephone calls, line rentals, IT and internet costs be separated from the Basic Allowance to make the scheme more transparent.
- 9.4.2 The 2018 Review also recommended that the Basic Allowance be increased in line with any NJC increase agreed each year from 2020/21. The current budget assumes that such an increase will be 3% which would raise the current allowance to £5593.

9.5 Setting the Basic Allowance – Expected Time Inputs

- 9.5.1 The 2018 Members Allowances Survey indicates that Councillors work a minimum average of 16 hours a week and a maximum of 18 hours per week for Basic Allowance work.

9.6 The Voluntary Principle – Or Public Service Ethos

- 9.6.1. The statutory guidance requires the maintenance of the principle of public service when setting an appropriate Basic Allowance. This is the notion that an important part of being a Councillor is serving the public and, therefore, not all of what a Councillor does should be remunerated; a portion of a Councillor's time should be given voluntarily.
- 9.6.2 The Members' Allowance Survey undertaken in 2018 indicated that the Public Service Discount should be set at 46%.

9.7 The Rate for the Job

- 9.7.1 Previous Independent Remuneration Panels utilised the Havant mean gross hourly wage rate as the rate for the job. In other words, to establish a rate for the job, it was recommended that a Member's hourly worth be on a par with the average hourly wage in Havant. The Panel notes that the average hourly wage in Havant for which latest figures are available was £15.10 per hour. This, the Panel accepted, as the optimum rate for the job in Havant Borough Council in arriving at the recommended Basic Allowance.

9.8 Calculating the Basic Allowance

- 9.8.1 If the Panel was simply to use the original variables from this review with an up dated rate for the job, which is £15.10 per hour it would result in the following recalibrated Basic Allowance:

Minimum

- = [832 hours per year minus 46 per cent] X £15.10 per hour
- = 449.28 hours X £15.10 = £6784 (rounded down to nearest £10)

Maximum

- = [936 hours per year minus 46 per cent] X £15.10 per hour
- = 505.44 hours X £15.10 = £7632 (rounded down to nearest £10)

At first sight the Council's current rate is below the minimum and maximum calculated basic allowances by £1354 and £2202 respectively. However, when factoring in the increase in line with staff salary increases (see 9.4.2 above) the difference between the basic allowance and the minimum and maximum allowance are £1191 and £2039.

9.9 Benchmarking the Basic Allowances

9.9.1 The Benchmarking exercise showed that the Council is lower than the mean and median averages for Basic Allowances paid by the benchmarking Councils. However, this difference has only widened by £55 and £244 for the mean and median averages since the last review, which is not considered significant enough to warrant an increase.

Benchmarking Councils	Basic Allowance
Havant Borough Council	£5,430
East Hampshire District Council	5,200
Fareham Borough Council	7,230
Test Valley Borough Council	7,390
Winchester City Council	5,970

Mean	£6,244
Median	£5,970

9.9.2 If the increase in line with staff salaries is taken into account, together with the modernisation allowance, which is included in two of the benchmark Councils basic allowance, the basic allowance is equal to the median average of the benchmark councils and only £322 below the mean average.

10. Conclusions of the Panel

10.1 Following feedback from Members, the Panel considered if there was any impact as result of the pandemic, which would support an increase in the Basic Allowances. In this regard, the Panel could not find any justification to an increase, given that the decision was made in January this year, which was during a pandemic lockdown.

10.2 The Panel recognises that the Basic Allowance is currently lower than the other benchmark Councils and the basic allowance calculated using the government guidance. However, taking into account the changes in the basic allowance since the last review and the fact that there have been no significant changes since the Council agreed in January, not to increase its basic allowance except a rise in line with an increase in staff salaries, it cannot justify any changes.

10.3 The panel therefore recommends as follows:

- That there be no change to the members allowance scheme in relation to the Basic Allowance
- To be clear, that the Basic Allowance still be increased in line with any NJC increase each year from 1 April 2020/21

11 Confirmation of Implementation and Indexing

11.1 The Panel recommends that the recommendations contained within this report are implemented as soon as possible.

11.2 The scheme to be implemented from 1 April 2022 provides for all SRAs (including the Leader) to be increased in line with any NJC increase from 1 April 2022. This should ensure that the allowances do not fall further behind the benchmark councils. It is felt that this index should be applied to the SRAs recommended in this report.

11.3 When a scheme of allowances is amended a council may choose to apply the amendment

retrospectively to the beginning of the financial year in which the amendment is made. In accordance with the Guidance on Regulation for Local Authority Allowances the Panel recommends that for the SRAs recommended in this report should be backdated to the beginning of the municipal (financial) year 2020/21.

- 11.4 The Panel is content that the increase in the Leader's Allowance due to come into effect from 1 April 2022 should not lead to an increase in the other SRAs (including the SRAs recommended in this report) but the differentials for the Councillors' Allowances Scheme should be amended to accommodate the increase in the Leader's Allowance.

12 Limits on SRAs

- 12.1 The Panel recommends that, as per the current practice, Members can draw one SRA only, regardless of the number of remunerated posts they may hold.