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**The report of the Independent Remuneration Panel  
appointed to review the allowances paid to Councillors  
of Southampton City Council**

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October 2022

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## 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 Southampton City Council formally appointed the following persons to undertake this process and make recommendations on its future scheme.

Linda Taylor- Employment Relations Specialist and local resident  
Adam Wheeler- Former Emeritus Professor and former Provost of the University of Southampton and local resident;  
Mark Palmer- Development Director, 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 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 full review of councillors' allowances was undertaken by the IRP for the Council in October 2018.
- 2.1.2 The Scheme currently provides that all councillors are each entitled to a total basic allowance of £13,900 per annum. The basic allowance since 2014 has been based on the Real Living Wage as recommended by the Living Wage Foundation, the current rate is £10.90 per hour outside of London. In addition, some councillors receive special responsibility allowance for undertaking additional duties.
- 2.1.3 Councillors may also claim the cost of travel and subsistence expenses, for expenditure on the care of children or dependants whilst on approved duties. The Council also introduced a Parental Leave policy in 2019 based on the approach recommended by the Local Government Association (LGA ) Labour Group.

## 3. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING OUR REVIEW

### 3.1 The Fair Remuneration Principle

- 3.1.1 The Panel advocate a principle of fair remuneration. The Panel in 2022 subscribes 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.<sup>1</sup>*

- 3.1.2 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.
- 3.1.3 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.
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- 3.1.4 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.
- 3.1.5 The Panel also sought 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.
- 3.1.6 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**

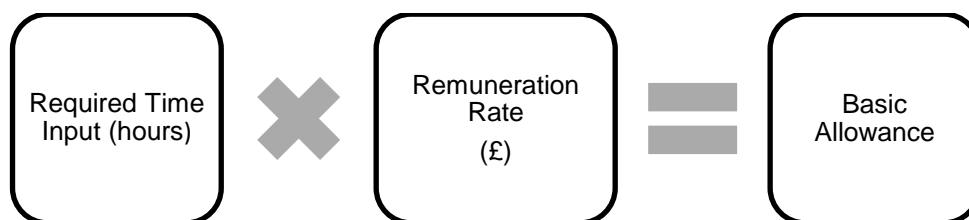
- 4.1.1 A Council's scheme of allowances must include provision for a basic allowance, payable at an equal flat rate to all councillors. The guidance on arriving at the basic allowance states, "Having established what local councillors do, and the hours which are devoted to these tasks the local authorities will need to take a view on the rate at which, and the number of hours councillors ought to be remunerated."<sup>2</sup>
- 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
  - Other matters required by Government.

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<sup>2</sup> The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, and Inland Revenue (now HM Revenue and Customs), *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraph 67.

<sup>4</sup> The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Inland Revenue (now HM Revenue and Customs), *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraphs 66-81.

- 4.1.4 The guidance identifies the issues and factors an IRP should have regard to when making a scheme of allowances.<sup>3</sup> For the basic allowance we considered two variables in our calculation: the time required to execute the role effectively and the rate for remuneration.



- 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 questionnaires and interviews with councillors and through reference to the relevant information. In addition, we considered further information about the number, range, and frequency of committee meetings.<sup>4</sup>
- 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 continues to be 27 hours per week.

#### Remuneration Rate

- 4.1.8 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.
- 4.1.9 To help identify an hourly rate for calculating allowances, the Panel was of the view that this should continue to be based on the Real Living Wage as determined by the Living Wage Foundation on an annual basis. The current rate is £10.90 per hour (outside of London).

#### Calculating the basic allowance

- 4.1.10 After determining the amount of time required each week to fulfil the role (27 hours) and the hourly rate to be used (£10.90 per hour), we calculated the basic allowance as follows:

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<sup>5</sup> The summary responses to the questionnaires are attached as Appendix 2.

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \boxed{1,404 \text{ hours} \\ \text{p.a. (27 hours} \\ \text{per week x 52} \\ \text{weeks)}} \\
 \times \\
 \boxed{\pounds 10.90} \\
 = \\
 \boxed{\pounds 15,303.60} \\ \text{per annum}
 \end{array}$$

- 4.1.11 The recommended Basic Allowance is therefore **£15,303.60** (£15,304 rounded).
- 4.1.12 This amount is intended to recognise the overall contribution made by councillors on committees, including their work on council bodies, ward work and attendance on external bodies.
- 4.1.13 We did also note the levels of basic allowance currently allocated by other comparative Unitary Councils across the South East, (see table below and Appendix 3). Highlighted Councils are the best comparators in terms of population size of Council.

Council	South East Unitary Councils: Basic Allowances (£) 2022 <sup>5</sup>
Bracknell Forest Council	12,0377
<b>Brighton and Hove City Council</b>	<b>13,360</b>
Buckinghamshire Council	13,260
Isle of Wight Council	8,377
<b>Milton Keynes Council</b>	<b>11,165</b>
Medway Council	10,585
<b>Portsmouth City Council</b>	<b>11,684</b>
Reading Borough Council	8,477
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Council	8,472
Slough Borough Council	7,779
<b>Southampton City Council</b>	<b>13,900</b>
West Berkshire Council	7,697
Wokingham Borough Council	7,784
<b>Average</b>	<b>10,092</b>

- 4.1.14 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. The Panel was of the view that the approach undertaken in this review provides a transparent and clear formula for calculating the Basic Allowance and has the continued support of councillors since 2014. The link to the Real Living Wage also supports the Councils commitment to be a *Real Living Wage Employer*.

**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that the Basic Allowance payable to all members of Southampton City Council be £15,304 per annum**

<sup>5</sup> Figures drawn from the South East Employers, Members' Allowances Survey 2022 (October 2022).

## 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 a SRA, the local electorate may rightly question the justification for this.<sup>6</sup>
- 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 of the Council
  - Executive Member (7)
  - Chairperson of Scrutiny Committee
  - Opposition Group Leader
  - Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
  - Chairs of Regulatory Panels, Committees and Sub Committees
  - Chairs of Scrutiny Panels, Committees and Commissions
  - Co-Opted Member

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

**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 continue to be adopted into the new Scheme of Allowances.**

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<sup>6</sup> The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraph 72.



## The Maximum Number of SRA's Payable

- 4.2.6 In accordance with the 2006 Statutory Guidance (paragraph 72) the Panel is of the view that the Council should adhere to the principal that no more than 50% of Council Members (24) should receive an SRA at any one time

## Calculating SRAs

- 4.2.7 The Panel supported the 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.
- 4.2.8 We applied a multiplier of the basic allowance to establish the Leader's SRA. Other SRAs are then valued downwards as a multiplier of the Basic Allowance. This approach has the advantage that, when future adjustments to the SRAs are required, changing the Basic Allowance will have a proportionate and easily calculable effect on all the SRAs within the scheme.

We grouped together into six Tiers those roles that we judged to have a similar level of responsibility. The outline result of this approach is illustrated in a pyramid of responsibility. The rationale for these six tiers of responsibility is discussed below.



### Leader (Tier One)

- 4.2.9 The Council elects annually a Leader who is ultimately 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.
- 4.2.10 The multiplier currently applied to calculate the Leader's SRA is 2 x the Basic Allowance. The Panel in 2018 recommended that the size of the role of Leader of Council in terms of both time commitment and complexity was worthy of an allowance of 2.5 x the Basic Allowance. The Panel in 2022 is still of this view and therefore recommends that the Leader's Allowance be 2.5 x the recommended Basic Allowance. This will result in a Leader's Allowance of £38,260.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Leader of the Council should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 2.5 x of the recommended Basic Allowance, £38,260.**

### Deputy Leader With Portfolio (Tier Two)

- 4.2.11 The Deputy Leader usually acts on the Leader's behalf in their absence and is a statutory required role as part of the Leader and Cabinet model of governance. From the information we gathered, we consider this additional responsibility should be reflected in the level of allowance. The Deputy Leader also has an active portfolio. Therefore, we recommend the creation of an SRA for the role of Deputy Leader With Portfolio. The Deputy Leader's SRA is recommended to be set at 1.25 x the Basic Allowance. If our recommendations concerning the Basic Allowance are adopted, this results in an allowance of £19,130.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Deputy Leader role receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 1.25 x the recommended Basic Allowance, £19,130.**

### Cabinet Member (Tier Three)

- 4.2.12 The Cabinet Members appointed by the Leader of the Council have significant delegated decision-making responsibilities and this responsibility has increased.
- 4.2.13 The Panel was of the view that it is important to provide the Leader with flexibility to appoint a Cabinet that is able to respond to the current and future challenges. The panel is therefore of the view that the Special Responsibility Allowance for a Cabinet Member should continue to be based on 1 x the recommended Basic Allowance, £15,304.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Cabinet Members receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 1 x the recommended Basic Allowance, £15,304.**

### Opposition Group Leader (Tier Four)

- 4.2.14 From the evidence gathered, including questionnaire responses and face to face interviews, we continue to consider the Opposition Group

Leader to be a significant role and the 2003 Regulations require that the a member of the opposition group receive a Special Responsibility Allowance. The Opposition Group Leader has to both ensure democratic accountability and the holding to account of the administration but also manage and develop a Group of a significant size. The Panel is therefore of the view that the Opposition Group Leader should continue to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance based on a per group member figure currently 1/24<sup>th</sup> of the Basic Allowance, £638 per Councillor. The per group member figure will be 1/26<sup>th</sup> of the Basic Allowance, £589 per Councillor following the boundary review implementation in May 2023.

**WE RECOMMEND that Opposition Group Leader should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance based on a per group member figure currently 1/24<sup>th</sup> of the recommended Basic Allowance, £638 per Councillor. The per group member figure will be based on 1/26<sup>th</sup> of the recommended Basic Allowance, £589 per Councillor following the boundary review implementation in May 2023. This will increase the number of Councillors from forty-eight to fifty- one.**

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, Chair of Regulatory Panel Committee or Sub Committee (Tier Five)

- 4.2.15 Overview and Scrutiny is a key role of the Council ensuring accountability and the holding to account of the decisions of Cabinet and external organisations. It has a significant statutory role supported by legislation. The Panel is therefore of the view that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Scrutiny should continue to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 0.5 x the recommended Basic Allowance, £7,652
- 4.2.16 The Chairs of the Regulatory Panel Committees and Sub Committees continue to be roles of significant responsibility and the Planning Committee was regarded by councillors in response to the questionnaire as one of the most significant Council Committees in respect of community impact and workload. The Regulatory Panels and Committees have regular meetings, additional site visits and a high level of public engagement. These Panel Committees require a significant time and workload commitment from the Chair. The Panel therefore recommend that the Chairs of the Regulatory Panel Committees should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 0.5 x the recommended Basic Allowance, £7,652.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the Chairs of the Regulatory Panel Committees and Sub Committees receive a Tier Five Special Responsibility Allowance of 0.5 x of the recommended Basic Allowance, £7,652.**

Chair of Scrutiny Panel, Committees or Commission (Tier Six)

- 4.2.17 The Chair of the Scrutiny Panel Committees or Commission should continue to receive a Tier Six Special Responsibility Allowance based on 0.25 x the recommended Basic Allowance, £3,826.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of Scrutiny Panel, Committees or Commissions should receive a Band Tier Six Special Responsibility Allowance based on 0.25 x the recommended Basic Allowance, £3,826.**

## Co-Opted Member

- 4.2.18 The Co-Opted Member should continue to receive an allowance of £719 per annum. This allowance should from June 2023 be indexed at the rate of the percentage increase in the Real Living Wage.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Co-Opted Member should receive an allowance of £719 per annum and this should be indexed from June 2023 at the rate of the percentage increase in the Real Living Wage.**

## **4.3 Travelling and Subsistence Allowance**

- 4.3.1 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 (see paragraph 5.10). Similarly, such an allowance may also be paid to Co-opted/Independent Members of a committee or sub-committee of the Council in connection with any of those 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 in connection with any approved councillor duties. The amount of travel payable shall continue to be in line with HM Revenue and Customs' rates. We propose no changes to the current travel allowances. WE ALSO RECOMMEND that no changes be made to the Subsistence Allowance scheme payable for approved councillor duties. The Panel encourages all Councillors to claim for travel and subsistence allowances that they may be entitled to.**

**WE FURTHER RECOMMEND that a travel allowance for electric vehicles should be promoted based on the current HM Revenue and Customs' rate of 45p per mile.**

## **4.4 Dependant Carers' Allowance**

- 4.4.1 The dependant carers' allowance should ensure that potential candidates are not deterred from standing for election to council and should enable current councillors to continue despite any change in their personal circumstances. The Panel in 2018 recommended that the dependant carers' allowance should be payable at a maximum rate equivalent to the Real Living Wage, currently £10.90 per hour and this recommendation was adopted as part of the current Scheme of Members Allowances.
- 4.4.2 The Panel is now of the view that due to the increase of the cost of care and in particular more specialist care for adults and children with special needs then the Dependant Carers' Allowance should now be reimbursed at cost for both childcare and more specialist care.
- 4.4.3 The Panel is now of the view that the cost of childcare and more specialist care 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.

**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND** that the **Dependent's Carers' Allowance** for childcare and more specialist care should be based at cost upon production of receipts. In the case of more specialist care a requirement of medical evidence that this type of care be required should be provided by a medical expert. The allowance should also have no daily or monthly maximum claim when undertaking Approved Councillor Duties.

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

#### **4.5 Parental Leave**

- 4.5.1 In 2018 the Panel recommended a Parental Leave Policy be adopted and in 2019 the Council approved and introduced a Parental Leave Policy based on the Local Government Association (LGA) Labour Group Model Policy.
- 4.5.2 The Panel recommends that this policy and commitment to parental leave continues to be part of the new Schedule of Members Allowances and is actively promoted to prospective, newly elected and current councillors

**WE RECOMMEND** that the current **Parental Leave Policy based on the LGA Labour Group Model Policy** continues to be part of the new **Scheme of Members Allowances**. The Policy should also be actively promoted to prospective, newly elected and current Councillors alongside the **Dependents' Carers Allowance**.

#### **4.6 Indexing of Allowances**

- 4.6.1 A scheme of allowances may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances in line with a specified index. The present scheme indexes the allowances to the Real Living Wage increase as approved annually by the Living Wage Foundation and the basic allowance is adjusted annually at this rate in June of each year.
- 4.6.2 The Panel also recommends that from June 2023 the Co-Opted Member Allowance should be indexed at the percentage rate of increase of the Real Living Wage.

**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND** that an annual indexation of the basic allowance should be increased in line with the Real Living Wage as approved by the Living Wage Foundation. **WE ALSO RECOMMEND** that the **Co-Opted Member Allowance** should be increased at the percentage rate increase in the Real Living Wage. The indexation will continue to be applied in June each year for a period of up to four years commencing in June 2023. After this period, the Scheme shall be reviewed again by an independent remuneration panel.

#### **4.7 Revocation of current Scheme of Allowances / Implementation of the new Scheme**

- 4.7.1 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 2023-24 financial year, at which time the current scheme of allowances will be revoked.**

#### **4.8 Backdating of the Recommended Scheme of Allowances**

- 4.8.1 The 2003 Regulations allow for the recommended scheme of allowances to be backdated to the beginning of the financial year if required. No backdating is required following this review as the recommendations will take effect from the beginning of the 2023-24 financial year.

#### **4.9 ICT Allowance**

- 4.9.1 The Council currently awards an ICT allowance of £15.00 per month for those that claim it. The Panel is of the view that this allowance should be withdrawn.

**WE RECOMMEND that the ICT Allowance of £15.00 per month should be withdrawn.**

### **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 20 of the 48 current councillors (42% response). The information obtained was helpful in informing our deliberations.
- 5.1.2 We interviewed current councillors from both political groups and held a workshop for Councillors. We used a structured questioning process. We are grateful to all our interviewees for their assistance.

#### **5.2 Councillors' views on the level of allowances**

- 4.9.2 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.

**Mark Palmer (Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel)  
Development Director, South East Employers  
October 2022**

## Appendix 1: Summary of Panel's Recommendations

Allowance	Current Amount for 2022-23	Number	Recommended Allowance	Recommended Allowance Calculation
<b>Basic (BA)</b>				
<b>Total Basic:</b>	<b>£13,900</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>£15,304</b>	

<b>Special Responsibility:</b>				
Leader of the Council	£27,800	1	£38,260	2.5 x BA
Deputy Leader With Portfolio	NO SRA	1	£19,130	1.25 x BA
Cabinet Member	£13,900	7	£15,304	1x BA
Opposition Group Leader	£12,163	1	£12,753	1/24 <sup>th</sup> of the BA x by the no in the group 1
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee	£6,950	1	£7,652	0.5 x BA
Chair of Regulatory Panels, Committees and Commissions	£6,950	4	£7,652	0.5 x BA
Chair of Scrutiny Panels, Committees and Commissions	£3,475	6	£3,826	0.25 x BA
Co-Opted Member	£719	1	£719	Indexed to percentage increase in the Real Living Wage

1. The per Member Rate to be based on 1/26<sup>th</sup> of the Basic Allowance from May 2023 when the number of councillors increases to 51









