

# **The Recommendations of West Oxfordshire District Council's Independent Remuneration Panel of Members' Allowances for the Financial Year 2018/2019**

## **Introduction**

West Oxfordshire District Council is required under *The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021)* to appoint and maintain a Panel to advise on an annual basis the level of allowances payable to District Councillors. This Panel is independent of the Council and representative of the communities within the area that the local authority serves. The Council, before the beginning of each year must publish a scheme for the payment of a basic allowance for councillors and shall also make provision for special responsibility allowances, dependants' carers' allowance, travelling and subsistence, and payments to co-opted members. This scheme of Allowances was designed to ensure that the allowances were set at levels that fairly reflected the responsibilities and workload that members were required to undertake. Before the Council makes or amends the scheme they must have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Panel first commissioned in 2001, is made up of four members, Susan Corrigan, Janet Eustace, Margaret Watts and Michael Ryan (Chair). The Panel is grateful for the assistance given by Keith Butler, Head of Democratic Services in enabling the undertaking of this review.

A number of previous Panel reports and other information can be found by following the links from [www.westoxon.gov.uk/councillors](http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/councillors)

The Panel met on 1 November 2017.

## **Preface to the Review Findings.**

The Panel met in November to consider the allowances to be paid to District Councillors for the year commencing April 2018. With the Panel's recommendations accepted in each of the last two years the consensus was to continue reflecting the Government's sustained cautiousness to public sector pay increases.

We were keen to receive any views or proposals from District Councillors and are grateful to the small number who responded. In the main the views expressed agreed that to reflect the increase in staff pay was appropriate and fair at a time when austerity continues to dominate Government thinking, is clearly evident in the private sector, and the Council's intended provision in the budget for a 2% increase in staff pay confirms this thinking.

In addition to considering a general increase the Panel made a brief review of the posts that receive Special Responsibility Allowances and believes with one exception that these continue to reflect the additional responsibilities that the holders of these positions undertake.

At the time of finalising this report, the employers nationally have offered an across the board 2% pay increase to be effective from April 2018. Should the finally approved increase be higher, then it is the view of the Panel that the increases for Councillors should similarly be increased, and if this is approved then we would leave it for the Council to decide how this would be implemented.

## **Review Considerations and Recommendations for 2018/19**

### **Basic Allowance**

The Panel recommends that the Basic Allowance be increased in line with staff awards. If this figure is confirmed as 2% this will lift the current payment from £4600 to £4700, with rounding, with effect from April 2018.

## **Special Responsibility Allowance**

Special Responsibility Allowances recognise the additional responsibilities and workload undertaken by the Leader, his Deputy, and members of the Cabinet, as well as the holders of other positions in the Council decision making structure. The Panel recommends the same percentage increase as the Basic Allowance, as previously applied via a multiple of the Basic Allowance. For a cabinet member this allowance would rise from £11,500 to £11,750.

The Panel continues to recommend that the restrictions for Members of the Cabinet to receive only one SRA, and for other councillors to be entitled to a (revised) maximum amount equivalent to a Cabinet allowance of £11,750 should remain in place.

The SRA for a Councillor appointed to the Board of Cottsway Housing should continue to be linked to the remuneration of other Cottsway Board members.

This recommended percentage increase is carried through the other posts that receive a Special Responsibility Allowance and are as listed in the [schedule of recommended allowances](#) at the end of this report.

The exception is the position of Chair of the Human Resources Committee. Our enquiries revealed that (i) the Committee had met only very infrequently and for very brief meetings in recent times; (ii) in any event, most staff had now transferred to Publica; and (iii) it seemed likely that there would be a proposal for the Committee to be dis-established with effect from the 2018/19 civic year. Accordingly, we recommend the cessation of the Special Responsibility Allowance with effect from 1 April 2018.

## **Travel, Subsistence and other Expenses**

The Panel continues to recommend in relation to travel that the mileage rate is maintained at the Inland Revenue's non-profit making rate, currently 45p/mile. All other allowable travel claims to remain as currently set.

Claims for subsistence should remain as applicable to Council/Publica staff.

## **Dependant Carers' Allowance.**

The Panel believes that they are in line with similar allowances in other Councils and recommends no change for the coming year.

## **Co-opted Members' Allowances.**

The Panel is of the opinion that there should be no changes to their level of allowance or payments.

## **In Conclusion**

The Panel trusts that the Council will find favour with these recommendations when the scheme is considered at its meeting in January 2018.

M. Ryan  
Panel Chair

December 2017

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND SCHEDULE OF CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED BASIC AND SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES**

**Recommendations**

The Panel recommends: (i) the payment of basic and special responsibility allowances as set out in the Table below; and (ii) that no other changes are made to the Council's Scheme of Allowances, meaning that mileage for approved duties will remain at the Inland Revenue non-profit rate, currently 45p per mile; subsistence will remain at the rate for Council Staff; and no change in relation to allowances for Dependant Carers and co-optees.

**Table of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances**

<b>POSITION</b>	<b>CURRENT</b>	<b>PROPOSED</b>	<b>TOTAL (inc BASIC)</b>
Basic Allowance (all members)	£4,600	£4,700	
Leader of Council	£20,700	£21,150	£25,800
Deputy Leader	£13,800	£14,100	£18,775
Cabinet Member	£11,500	£11,750	£16,425
Chairman of Council	£4,600	£4,700	£9,400
Chairmen of O&S Committees	£4,600	£4,700	£9,400
Chairmen of Area Planning Sub-Committees	£5,750	£5,875	£10,575
Chairman of HR Committee	£1,150	None	£4,700
Chairman of Development Control Committee	£1,150	£1,175	£5,875
Chairman of Licensing Committee	£1,150	£1,175	£5,875
Chairman of Audit & GP Committee	£1,150	£1,175	£5,875
Chairman of Misc. Licensing Committee	£575	£585	£5,285
Opposition Group Leader	£1,150 *	£1,175	£5,875
Councillor appointed to the Board of Cottsway Housing	£2,250	£2,250 **	£6,950

\* currently there are two opposition groups, with five and four members respectively. The SRA increases when there are six, 11, 16 etc members in the applicable political group.

\*\* the actual recommended amount is 60% of that paid by Cottsway to other Board Members, which is currently £3,750 pa. It is not currently known whether this will change in 2018/19.