



**The report of the Independent Remuneration Panel  
appointed to review the allowances paid to Councillors  
of New Forest District Council**



November 2024

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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 New Forest District Council formally appointed the following persons to undertake this process and make recommendations on its future scheme.

Julia Abbott- Retired Academic Professional and local resident of Hampshire  
Roger Farrall- Former senior Local Government Officer and local resident of Hampshire

Martin James- Retired Human Resources Specialist and local resident of Hampshire

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.
  - (v) co-optees' allowance and
  - (vi) Independent persons allowance

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 review of councillors' allowances was undertaken by the IRP for the Council in March 2022. This review was prompted by a recommendation following the 2022 review that following the implementation of the Boundary Commission review that reduced the number of councillors from sixty to forty-eight then the IRP should meet two years after the implementation of the review. This was to ascertain if the reduction in councillors had impacted on the workload and hours of work of the councillor role. This will relate to the recommended Basic Allowance.
- 2.1.2 The Scheme currently provides that all councillors are each entitled to a total basic allowance of £7,612 per annum. The basic allowance is subject to an indexation linked to the NJC for Local Government Services Staff Salary increase. In addition, some councillors receive special responsibility allowances for undertaking additional duties.
- 2.1.3 Councillors may also claim the cost of travel and subsistence expenses and for expenditure on the care of children or dependants whilst on approved duties.

## 3. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING OUR REVIEW

### 3.1 The Public Service Principle

- 3.1.1 This is the principle that an important part of being a councillor is the desire to serve the public and, therefore, not all of what a councillor does should be remunerated. Part of a councillor's time should be given voluntarily. The consolidated guidance notes the importance of this principle when arriving at the recommended basic allowance.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, we found that a public service concept or ethos was articulated and supported by all of the councillors we interviewed and in the vast majority of responses to the questionnaire completed by councillors as part of our review.
- 3.1.2 To provide transparency and increase an understanding of the Panel's work, we will recommend the application of an explicit Public Service Discount (or PSD). Such a PSD is applied to the time input necessary to fulfil the role of a councillor. Further explanation of the PSD to be applied is given below in Section 4.

### 3.2 The Fair Remuneration Principle

- 3.2.1 Alongside the belief that the role of the elected Councillor should, in part, be viewed as unpaid voluntary service, we advocate a principle of fair remuneration. The Panel in 2024 continues to subscribe 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*

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<sup>1</sup> The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government Inland Revenue (now HM Revenue & Customs), *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraph 68.

<sup>2</sup> Rodney Brooke and Declan Hall, *Members' Remuneration: Models, Issues, Incentives and Barriers*. London: Communities and Local Government, 2007, p.3.

*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>2</sup>

3.2.2 We are keen to continue 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.

3.2.3 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.

3.2.4 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.

3.2.5 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.

3.2.6 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*

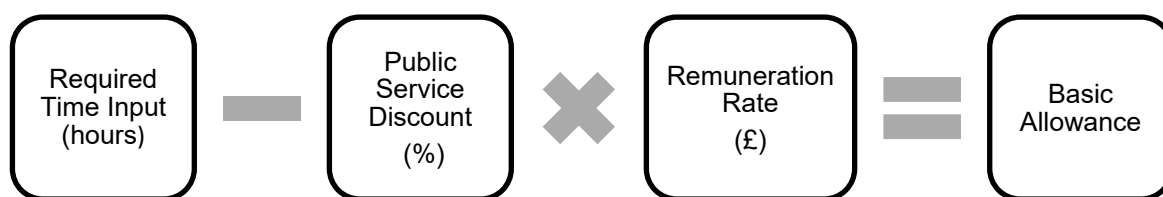
on the rate at which, and the number of hours councillors ought to be remunerated.”<sup>3</sup>

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.

4.1.4 The guidance identifies the issues and factors an IRP should have regard to when making a scheme of allowances.<sup>4</sup> For the basic allowance we considered three variables in our calculation: the time required to execute the role effectively; the public service discount; 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>5</sup>

4.1.7 Discounting attendance at political meetings (which we judged to be centred upon internal political management), we find that the

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<sup>3</sup> The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 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 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government 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.

<sup>5</sup> The summary responses to the questionnaires are available as background papers.

average time commitment required to execute the role of a councillor with no special responsibilities is 13 hours per week.

### Public Service Discount (PSD)

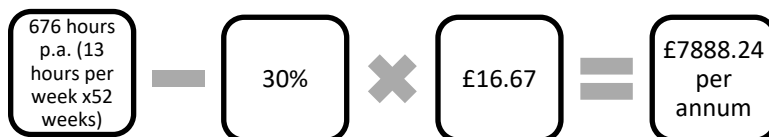
- 4.1.8 From the information analysed, we found councillors espoused a high sense of public duty. Given the weight of evidence presented to us concerning, among other factors, the levels of responsibility, the varied nature of the role, the need for learning and development, and the increasing accessibility and expectations of the public, we recommend a Public Service Discount of 30 per cent to the calculation of the basic allowance. This percentage sits within the mid-range of PSDs applied to basic allowances by councils.

### Remuneration Rate

- 4.1.9 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.
- 4.1.10 To help identify an hourly rate for calculating allowances, we utilised relevant statistics about the local labour market published by the Office for National Statistics. We selected the average (median), full-time gross<sup>6</sup> wage per hour for the New Forest District Council area £16.67<sup>7</sup> per hour.

### Calculating the basic allowance

- 4.1.11 After determining the amount of time required each week to fulfil the role (13 hours), the level of PSD to be applied (30%) and the hourly rate to be used (£16.67), we calculated the basic allowance as follows:



- 4.1.12 The gross Basic Allowance before the PSD is applied is **£11,268.92**. Following the application of the PSD this leads to a basic allowance of **£7888.24** per annum.
- 4.1.13 This amount is intended to recognise the overall contribution made by councillors, including their work on council bodies, division work and attendance on external bodies.

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<sup>6</sup> The basic allowance, special responsibility allowance, dependants' carers' allowance, and co-optees' allowance are taxable as employment income.

<sup>7</sup> The Nomis official labour market statistics: Hourly Pay – Gross median (£) For full-time employee jobs by place of residence: UK December 2023.

4.1.14 We did also note the levels of basic allowance currently allocated by other comparative District and Borough Councils across Hampshire, (see table below and background papers).

<b>Council</b>	<b>Hampshire District and Borough Councils: Basic Allowances (£) 2024<sup>8</sup></b>
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	8,046
East Hampshire District Council	7,298
Eastleigh Borough Council	8,349
Fareham Borough Council	8,003
Gosport Borough Council	7,968
Hart District Council	5,064
Havant Borough Council	6,136
<b>New Forest District Council</b>	<b>7,612</b>
Rushmoor Borough Council	6,441
Test Valley Borough Council	8,951
Winchester City Council	6,956
<b>Average</b>	<b>7,331</b>

4.1.15 The Panel wished to ensure the level of basic allowance goes some way as not to constitute a barrier to candidates from all sections of the community standing, or re-standing, for election as councillors. However, the Panel acknowledges that the recommended allowance in itself will not act as a single incentive to encourage people to stand for council and other areas of the Members Allowance Scheme the Dependant Carers' Allowance and Parental Leave Policy can also be promoted to encourage prospective councillor candidates. The Panel was of the view the approach undertaken in this review of a transparent and clear formula for calculating the Basic Allowance will assist a future Panel in recommending a Basic Allowance.

**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that the Basic Allowance payable to all members of New Forest District Council be £7888 per annum**

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<sup>8</sup> Figures drawn from the South East Employers, Members' Allowances Survey 2024 (October 2024).



## 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>9</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
  - Portfolio Holders (4)
  - Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Panels (3)
  - Chairman of Planning Committee
  - Chairman of General Purposes and Licensing Committee
  - Chairman of Audit Committee
  - Major Opposition Group Leader
  - Deputy Leader of Major Opposition Group
  - Minority Group Leader
  - Chairman of the Council
  - Vice Chairman of the Council
  - Chairman of Human Resources (HR) Committee
  - Co-Opted Members
  - Independent Persons

### One SRA Only Rule

- 4.2.4 To improve the transparency of the scheme of allowances, we continue to 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:

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<sup>9</sup> The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government and *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraph 72.

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

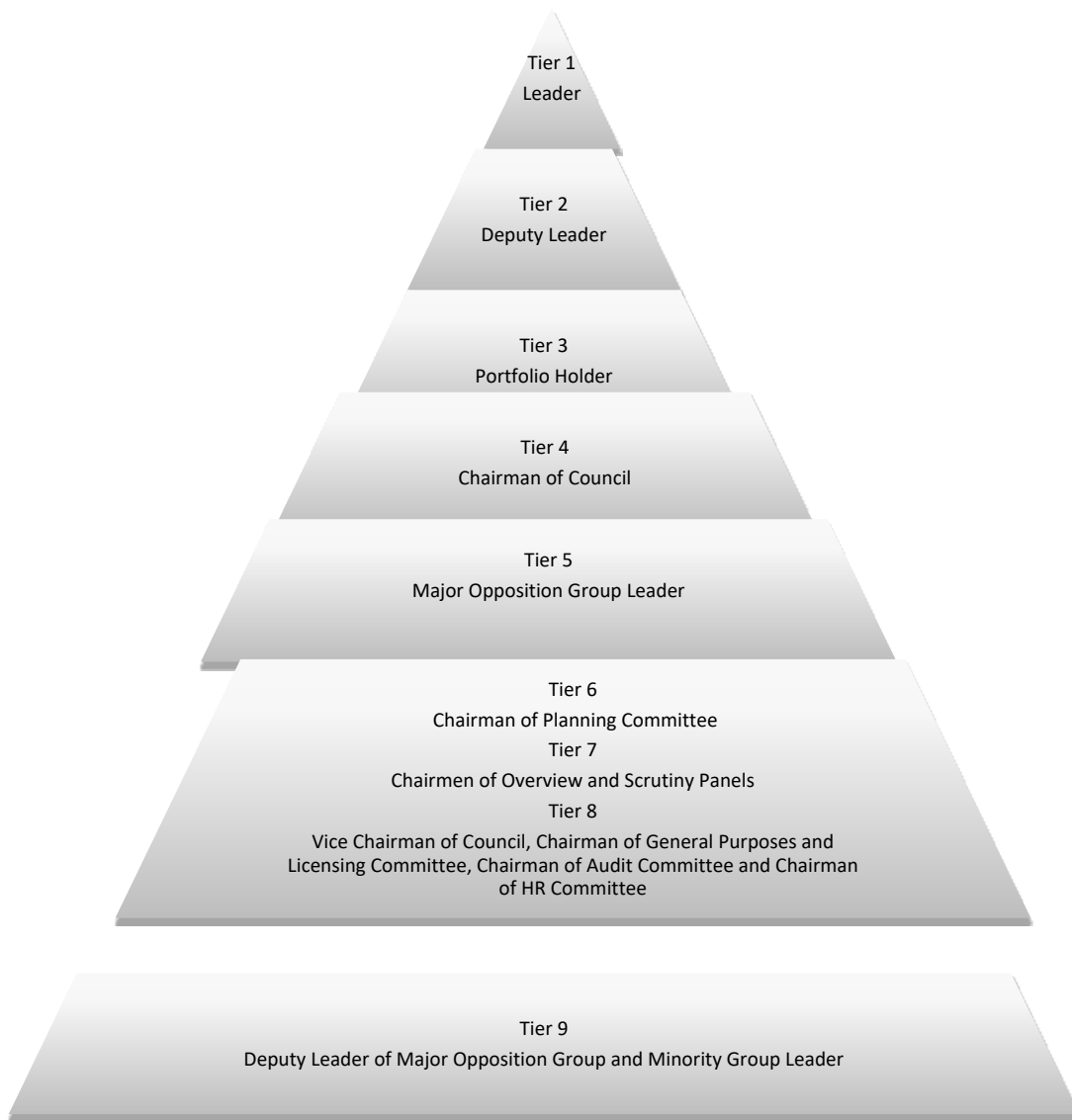
#### The Maximum Number of SRA's Payable

- 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 percentage of the Leader's allowance. This approach has the advantage that, when future adjustments to the SRAs are required, changing the Leader's SRA will have a proportionate and easily calculable effect on the other SRAs within the scheme.

We grouped together in 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 nine tiers of responsibility is discussed below.

Leader (Tier One)

- 4.2.9 The Council elects for a four-year term of office 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 we applied to calculate the Leader's SRA is 310% (3.1 x times) the basic allowance. If the recommended option of a basic allowance with a PSD of 30% is adopted, this results in a Leader's Allowance of £24,453.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Leader of the Council should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 310% of the recommended basic allowance, £24,453.**

#### Deputy Leader (Tier Two)

- 4.2.11 The Deputy Leader usually acts on the Leader's behalf in their absence and is a 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. Therefore, we recommend the Deputy Leader's SRA be set at 60% of the Leader's SRA. If our recommendations concerning the basic allowance and the Leader's SRA are adopted, this results in an allowance of £14,672.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Deputy Leader receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 60% of the recommended Leader's Allowance, £14,672.**

#### Portfolio Holders (Tier Three)

- 4.2.12 Portfolio Holders, 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 greater flexibility to appoint a Cabinet that is best 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 be 50% of the Leader's Allowance, £12,227.

**WE RECOMMEND that a Portfolio Holder (Cabinet Member) should continue to receive an allowance of 50% of the recommended Leader's Allowance, £12,227.**

#### Chairman of the Council (Tier Four)

- 4.2.14 The role of the Chairman of the Council is highly visible across the District Council area and undertakes a high number of civic engagements that raise the profile of the Council and the district. Following the 2022 review the Chairman's Allowance was recommended to be amalgamated into the Scheme of Allowances for Members. We continue to recommend that the role of the Chairman of the Council be recognised at Tier Four and receive an allowance of £9,781, 40% of the Leader's Allowance.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Chairman of the Council continue to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 40% of the recommended Leader's Allowance, £9,781.**

#### Major Opposition Group Leader (Tier Five)

- 4.2.15 From the evidence gathered, including questionnaire responses and face to face interviews, we continue to consider the Major 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 Major 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, fourteen councillors. The Panel is therefore of the view that the Major Opposition Group

Leader should continue to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 37.5% of the Leader's Allowance, £9,170.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Major Opposition Group Leader receive a Tier Five Special Responsibility Allowance of 37.5% of the recommended Leader's Allowance, £9,170. The Panel further recommends that the qualification for receiving the Special Responsibility Allowance, 20% of Council membership should continue.**

Chairman of Planning Committee (Tier Six)

- 4.2.16 The Chairman of the Planning Committee continues to be a role of significant responsibility and the Planning Committee continues to be regarded by councillors in response to the questionnaire as the most significant of the Council Committees in respect of community impact and workload. The Planning Committee has regular meetings, additional site visits and a high level of public engagement. The role of the Chairman of the Planning Committee requires a significant time and workload commitment from the Chairman. The Panel therefore recommends that the Chairman of the Planning Committee should continue to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 35% of the Leader's Allowance, £8,559.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Chairman of the Planning Committee should continue to receive a Tier Six Special Responsibility Allowance of 35% of the recommended Leader's Allowance, £8,559.**

Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels (Tier Seven).

- 4.2.17 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. Overview and Scrutiny can also lead on policy development. It has a significant statutory role supported by legislation. The Council has also reduced the number of Panels from four to three. The Panel is therefore of the view that the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels should continue to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 25% Leader's Allowance, £6,113.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels receive a Tier Seven Special Responsibility of 25% of the recommended Leader's Allowance, £6,113.**

Vice Chairman of Council, Chairman of General Purposes Committee, Chairman of Audit Committee and Chairman of Human Resources (HR) Committee (Tier Eight)

- 4.2.18 The role of Vice Chairman of Council like that of the Chairman continues to be a high-profile role that has an impact across the district and Council and a workload based on the number and frequency of civic engagements. The Panel is of the view that the role of Vice Chairman should continue to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance based on 10% of the Leader's Allowance, £2,445.
- 4.2.19 The role of Chairman of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee continues to be regarded as a Tier Eight role and

should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance based on 10% of the Leader's Allowance, £2,445.

- 4.2.20 The Chairman of the Human Resources Committee should continue to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 10% of the Leader Allowance, £2,445.
- 4.2.21 The role of the Audit Committee is evolving in many councils and this has included the recruitment of an Independent Person for the Audit Committee to provide critical friend challenge and accountability. New Forest District Council has not as yet made any changes to the terms of reference of the Audit Committee or appointed an Independent Person to the Committee. The Panel is therefore of the view that at this stage the Chairman of the Audit Committee should continue to receive an allowance of 10% of the Leader's Allowance, £2,445.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Vice Chairman of Council, Chairman of General Purposes and Licensing Committee, Chairman of Audit Committee and Chairman of the Human Resources (HR) Committee should receive a Tier Seven Allowance, 10% of the recommended Leader's Allowance, £2,445.**

Minority Group Leader, Deputy Leader of Major Opposition Group (Tier Nine)

- 4.2.22 The Leaders of the Minority Groups are still a role of importance and the Panel continued to be of the view that the Leader(s) of the Minority Group(s) should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance. The Panel is of the view that the current Minority Group Leader's should receive a Tier Nine allowance, based on 20% of the recommended Major Opposition Group Leader's Allowance, £1,834.
- 4.2.23 The Panel also continued to be of the view that the Deputy Leader of the Major Opposition Group should receive a Tier Nine allowance of £1,834, 20% of the Major Opposition Group Leader's Allowance. The Panel was again informed that the role had responsibilities commensurate of receiving a Special Responsibility Allowance.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Minority Group Leader(s), should receive a Tier Nine Allowance, 20% of the recommended Major Opposition Group Leader's Allowance, £1,834. WE FURTHER RECOMMEND that the Deputy Leader of the Main Opposition Group should also receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 20% of the recommended Major Opposition Group Leader's Allowance, £1,834. WE ALSO RECOMMEND that the qualification for these Allowances continue as approved within the current Scheme of Allowances.**

Co-Optee's Allowance

- 4.2.24 The Panel continues to recommend that the Co-Optees allowance be based on an hourly rate of £16.67 per hour (Nomis median hourly rate for full time employees by place of residence for the New Forest District Council area, December 2023). The Panel is aware that the Council currently has no Co-Optees. The Panel is also of the view that this allowance should also include payment for reasonable preparation time.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Co-Optees Allowance should be based on an hourly rate of £16.67 per hour. The allowance should be awarded on a per meeting basis and include payment for reasonable preparation time.**

#### Independent Persons Allowance

- 4.2.25 The Council currently does not have a payment for the Independent Persons within the Scheme of Allowances, however an annual payment of £353 per annum is made to the three Independent Persons. The Panel is of the view that current payment should continue within the recommended Scheme of Allowances.

**WE RECOMMEND that the Independent Persons continue to receive an annual Allowance of £353 per annum.**

#### **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, Independent Persons and Co-optees in connection with any approved duties. The amount of travel and subsistence payable shall continue to be at the maximum levels payable to council staff in line with HM Revenue and Customs' rates. We propose no changes to the current travel and subsistence allowances.**

**WE FURTHER RECOMMEND that a travel allowance for electric vehicles should continue to 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 current scheme awards reimbursement for Child Care at the rate of the Real Living Wage, **£12.60 per hour** and more specialist care at the actual cost.
- 4.4.2 The Panel is of the view that the Dependant Carers' Allowance should continue to be reimbursed at the rate of the Real Living Wage for Childcare for children under 16 years of age living with the councillor.
- 4.4.3 The Panel continues to be of the view that the cost of 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 be based on the Real Living Wage rate, £12.60 per hour. Specialist care should be based at cost upon production of receipts. In the case of specialist care a requirement of medical evidence that this type of care be required, the allowance should have no daily or monthly maximum claim when undertaking Approved Councillor Duties.**

**WE ALSO RECOMMEND that the Council should continue to 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 There is no uniform national policy to support councillors who require parental leave for maternity, paternity, or adoption leave. According to the Fawcett Society (Does Local Government Work for Women, 2018) a *'lack of maternity, paternity provision or support'* is a real barrier for women aged 18-44 to fulfil their role as a councillor. The Panel was pleased to see the Council approve and adopt a Parental Leave Policy that has been included in the Scheme following the 2022 review.

4.5.2 We continue to be of the view that support should be provided for parental leave and the nature of that support should be left to the Council to determine .

4.5.3 A parental leave policy can assist in supporting the diversity of Councillors, the Panel continues to recommend that the Members' Allowance Scheme include support for a parental leave policy that includes:

- All Councillors shall continue to receive their Basic Allowance in full for a period up to six months in the case of absence from their Councillor duties due to leave related to maternity, paternity, adoption shared parental leave or sickness absence
- Councillors entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance shall continue to receive their allowance in full for a period of six months, in the case of absence from their Councillor duties due to leave related to maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental leave or sickness absence
- Where for reasons connected with sickness, maternity leave, adoption leave, paternity leave or shared parental leave a Councillor is unable to attend a meeting of the Council for a period of six months, a dispensation by Council can be sought in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972
- If a replacement to cover the period of absence under these provisions is appointed by Council or the Leader (or in the case of a party group position the party group) the replacement shall be entitled to claim a Special Responsibility Allowance pro rata for the period over which the cover is provided.



- If a Councillor stands down, or an election is held during the period when a Councillor is absent due to any of the above and the Councillor is not re-elected or decides not to stand down for re-election, their Basic Allowance and any Special Responsibility Allowance will cease from the date they leave office.

**WE RECOMMEND that the current approach outlined above continues to be adopted. The policy on Parental Leave for Councillors approved should continue to be actively promoted to prospective and current Councillors alongside the Dependents' Carers Allowance to enhance and further increase the diversity of councillor representation.**

#### **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 National Joint Council Local Government pay award and the basic allowance, special responsibility allowances and Independent Persons allowance is adjusted annually at this rate.

**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that an annual indexation of the basic allowance, each of the SRAs and the Independent Persons Allowance should continue to be based on the current formula. The allowances should be increased annually in line with the percentage increase in the NJC Local Government pay award. The indexation should be linked to the percentage increase based on Spinal Column Point 49 of the Councils pay scale from April 2025 for a period of up to four years. 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 2025-26 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. The Panel therefore recommends that the Scheme be backdated to the beginning of the 2025-26 financial year.

**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that the new scheme of allowances be backdated to the beginning of the 2025-26 financial year.**

## **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 24 of the 48 current councillors (50% response). The information obtained was helpful in informing our deliberations.
- 5.1.2 We interviewed sixteen current councillors, the Independent Person and one officer using a structured questioning process. We are grateful to all our interviewees for their assistance.

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

- 5.2.2 A summary of the councillors' responses to the questionnaire are held as a background paper.

## **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.

**WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND: That the Approved Councillor Duties as outlined in the Members' Allowance Scheme remain unchanged.**

**Mark Palmer (Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel)  
Director: Development and Governance, South East Employers  
November 2024**

## Appendix 1: Summary of Panel's Recommendations

Allowance	Current Amount for 2024-25	Number	Recommended Allowance (30% PSD)	Recommended Allowance Calculation
<b>Basic (BA)</b>				
<b>Total Basic:</b>	<b>£7,612</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>£7,888</b>	

<b>Special Responsibility:</b>				
Leader of the Council	£24,129	1	£24,453	300% of BA
Deputy Leader	£14,478	1	£14,672	60% of Leader's Allowance
Portfolio Holder (Cabinet Member)	£12,065	4	£12,227	50% of Leader's Allowance
Chairman of the Council	£9,651	1	£9,781	40% of Leader's Allowance
Major Opposition Group Leader	£9,048	1	£9,170	37.5% of Leader's Allowance
Chairman of Planning Committee	£8,445	1	£8,559	35% of Leader's Allowance
Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Panels	£6,032	3	£6,113	25% of Leader's Allowance
Vice Chairman of the Council	£2,413	1	£2,445	10% of Leader's Allowance
Chairman of Audit Committee	£2,413	1	£2,445	10% of Leader's Allowance
Chairman of General Purposes & Licensing Committee	£2,413	1	£2,445	10% of Leader's Allowance
Chairman of Human Resources Committee	£2,413	1	£2,445	10% of Leader's Allowance
Minority Group Leaders	£1,810	2	£1,834	20% of Major Opposition Group Leader's Allowance
Deputy Leader of Major Opposition Group	£1,810	1	£1,834	20% of Major Opposition Group Leader's Allowance
Co-Optees Allowance	£16.67 per hour	0	£16.67 per hour	NOMIS hourly rate for New Forest by Place of Residence-2023
Independent Persons	£353	2	£353	



