



Members' Allowances Scheme

For

Test Valley Borough Council

6th Report by the Independent Advisory Panel

October 2014

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ALLOWANCES SCHEME

Before it can agree a new scheme of allowances for 2015 to 2019, the Council is required to have regard to the views and recommendations of its Independent Review Panel. It is not required to accept those recommendations, but must take proper account of them. The Independent Remuneration Panel is recommending the Borough Council to revise its current scheme of allowances with effect from 7th May 2015, to include the provisions set out below.

- **The payment of the following Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances from 7th May 2015:**

Basic Allowance (BA):	Current level	From 7 May 2015
All Councillors	£6,313	£6,313*
* to be adjusted to reflect any national pay award(s) for local government employees agreed before 7 th May 2015		
Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs):	Current level	From 7 May 2015
Leader of Council	1.9 x BA	1.9 x BA
Deputy Leader	1.3 x BA	1.3 x BA
Portfolio Holders	1.21 x BA	1.21 x BA
Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	1 x BA	1 x BA
Chairman of Planning Control Committee	0.75 x BA	0.75 x BA
Chairmen of Area Planning Committees	0.75 x BA	0.75 x BA
Chairman of Licensing Committee	0.75 x BA	0.6 x BA
Minority Opposition Group Leader	0.45 x BA	0.45 x BA
Chairman of Council	0.45 x BA	0.45 x BA
Chairman of General Purposes Committee	0.33 x BA	0.33 x BA
Vice-Chairmen of Area Planning Committees	20% of Chairman's SRA	20% of Chairman's SRA
Vice-Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	20% of Chairman's SRA	20% of Chairman's SRA
Vice-Chairman of Planning Control Committee	20% of Chairman's SRA	20% of Chairman's SRA
Vice-Chairman of Licensing Committee	20% of Chairman's SRA	20% of Chairman's SRA
Vice-Chairman of Council	20% of Chairman's SRA	20% of Chairman's SRA
Vice-Chairman of General Purposes Committee	20% of Chairman's SRA	20% of Chairman's SRA

- **All the above allowances will also be increased annually in line with any overall percentage increases awarded to employees by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services after 7th May 2015.**
- **No member of the Council shall receive more than one SRA.**
- **The arrangement whereby, if a member is unable to undertake all or most of the duties covered by a Special Responsibility Allowance for a continuous period of one calendar month or more because of illness, the provision in the Member Allowances regulations to adjust the allowance payable to that member *pro rata* to the proportion of the year for which the special responsibilities have not been undertaken will be applied.** (Conversely, a member who takes on the duties covered by an SRA for a continuous period of a month or more, when another member is ill, shall be entitled to receive the SRA, *pro rata*, for the period in question).
- **Continuation of the current Child Care and Dependent Carers scheme which:**
 - **Makes payment towards the costs necessarily incurred by a member in engaging a carer to look after children or other dependants who live at the same address as the member, when the member is absent from home**

undertaking any of the duties set out in Regulation 7 (1) (a) to (h) of the new Regulations

- Provides an hourly payment in line with actual costs incurred by the Councillor in purchasing the care, up to a maximum of £12.14 per hour (subject to any CPI-based adjustment in April 2015).
 - Precludes any payment if the caring is undertaken by a member of the Councillor's own immediate family (e.g. spouse, partner, older child or grandparent).
 - Limits the maximum level of payment in any one week to a maximum of 8 hours or the duration of 2 meetings (whichever is the lesser period).
 - Travel and subsistence allowances will be paid in respect of the same "approved duties" as in the Council's existing arrangements for such allowances.
 - Subsistence allowances to be paid at costs actually incurred by members, but not exceeding the following rates (subject to any CPI-based adjustment in April 2015):
 - Daytime (more than 4 hours away, ending before 7pm): £6.62
 - Evening (more than 4 hours away, ending after 7pm): £11.59
 - Where exceptional circumstances justify it, the Head of Administration should be able to authorise reimbursement of the cost of accommodation which has been booked directly by members and costs more than the £149.02 limit (subject to any CPI-based adjustment of the limit in April 2015.)
 - The payment of the following rates of travel allowance:
 - Use of members own car: 45p per mile (all engine sizes)
 - Use of members own motorcycle: 24p per mile (all engine sizes)
 - Use of members own bicycle: 20p per mile
 - Payment for carrying passengers 5p per passenger per mile
- with the above rates being kept in line with the HMRC's assessment of "per mile" operating costs.
- Reimbursement of the costs for rail travel be restricted to the appropriate class other than 1st class.
 - Payments to any co-opted members of the same travel and subsistence allowances which apply to Councillors in respect of attendance at meetings etc., plus any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses they incur, subject to the approval of the Head of Administration.
 - All the above allowance rates, other than the BA, SRAs, and rates of travel allowance, will be subject to
 - (prior to implementation) an increase on 1st April 2015 by the same percentage as the increase in the Consumer Prices Index for the preceding September; and

- **increases thereafter on 1st April each year by the same percentage as the increase in the Consumer Prices Index for the preceding September, commencing with an increase in April 2016.**
- **The withholding or recovery of allowances from any member who is suspended or disqualified.**
- **The publication on the Council's website of figures showing the attendance records of members at meetings, in accordance with the arrangements set out in paragraphs 51 to 57, below.**
- **A full review of all allowances by the Independent Review Panel in summer/autumn 2018 (with a view to recommending a revised allowance scheme for implementation from May 2019), unless members wish allowances to be reviewed again at an earlier stage, or there are changes in the Council's organisation or structure which require an earlier review of the current scheme.**

The Borough Council is also recommended to set its Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Allowances for the financial years 2015/16 to 2018/19 so as to provide gross allowances to the holders of these offices at the same level paid in 2014/15 (£15,000 and £5,500, respectively), to maintain these allowances at the same level throughout that period, and, from May 2015 onwards, to pay the allowances in monthly instalments.

DETAILED COMMENTARY AND BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Background

1. The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) require the Borough Council to seek further recommendations from its Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) on its members allowance scheme at least once every four years.
2. The IRP's last recommendations to the Council were made in October 2010, and the scheme adopted by the Council in response to these recommendations was put in place from May 2011. At that time, the Council resolved that the IRP should meet again in 2014, with a view to recommending a revised allowance scheme for implementation from May 2015
3. A Council's scheme of allowances must cover:
 - The Basic Allowance
 - Special Responsibility Allowances
 - Dependent Carers Allowance
 - Travel and Subsistence Allowances
 - Co-optees Allowances
 - Indexation of allowances

(Note that the Regulations have recently been amended so that it is no longer possible for members to have access to the Local Government Pension Scheme in any circumstances.)
4. Before it can agree its scheme of allowances, a Council is required to have regard to the views and recommendations of its Independent Review Panel on all of the above issues, with the exception of the withholding or recovery of allowances (although the Panel has commented on the latter issue in any case).
5. As well as recommending a new allowances scheme under the 2003 Regulations, the current panel was also asked to examine the current allowances paid to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to cover their expenses, and to recommend the future level of these allowances.
6. The 6th Test Valley Independent Remuneration Panel met on 7th and 8th October 2014 to review the current allowances scheme, and to consider its recommendations for a new scheme, together with the Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral allowances. The panel consisted of:

Trevor Cox, from the "My Test Valley" panel;

Michael Cronin, Independent Person (Appeals and Ethics Sub-Committee);

Steve Vale, an HR consultant, chairing the Panel, having chaired the previous three IRPs.

Our approach in 2014

7. Before considering any changes to previous allowances, we sought to obtain views on the strengths and weaknesses of the current scheme from as many members as possible. We therefore:
 - Reviewed the results of a questionnaire survey of all members, seeking their views on the principal elements of the current scheme;
 - Gave an opportunity to any member who wished to make representations to us in person to do so (5 Councillors took up our invitation).
 - Took the opportunity to ask those we interviewed about a number of issues which had emerged from the questionnaire survey, including:
 - the level of Basic Allowance, with particular attention on its adequacy in enabling members to meet the costs of IT equipment and running costs, telephone and connection costs, printing costs etc..
 - the roles for which Special Responsibility Allowances were payable, and the level at which they are paid, with particular attention to those payable to the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Licensing and General Purposes Committees, and to Committee Vice-Chairmen generally.
 - Measures to ensure that members are accountable and undertake the roles and duties expected of them, and for which allowances are paid.
 - The levels and adequacy of the Mayors and Deputy Mayor's Allowances
8. The Panel also felt obliged to continue to take account of circumstances which had affected its previous set of recommendations, including:
 - The local economic situation and changes in the local labour market;
 - The financial squeeze facing the public sector and local authorities in particular, which (all the indications are) will continue to bite in the years following the 2015 local elections; and
 - Greater public interest in and scrutiny of the remuneration paid for all public sector roles and duties, encouraged, to some extent, by Government ministers.
9. The combination of these factors led the panel to pursue an overall objective of keeping the cost of allowances in 2015/16 as near as possible to the cost of the existing allowances scheme (in cash terms) in 2014/15. Our assumption was that the local community would expect such an approach in the current circumstances.

Outcomes of the questionnaire survey

10. The questionnaire survey, which was conducted on our behalf prior to our meeting, elicited responses from 15 out of 48 members. This was a poorer response rate (31%) than previously, but we felt that any members with strong views on any of the issues would have completed a questionnaire, or, alternatively arranged to attend the Panel. On this basis we felt able to regard the views expressed in the survey, complemented by the views expressed by the members we met, as reasonably representative of the views of members.
11. The results of the questionnaire survey can be summarised as indicating that:

- The majority of members (67%) felt that the current Basic Allowance was adequate in relation to the work expected of them;
- For the most part, a substantial majority of members felt that Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) were paid in respect of the correct roles, and were paid at an appropriate level – the majority of these allowances had the approval of over 70% of members. The one exception was the SRAs payable to the Chair and Vice Chair of the General Purposes Committee, where only 13% supported their payment.
- Some members had raised questions over whether SRAs should be payable in respect of Overview and Scrutiny Lead members and the Council's representatives on certain outside bodies.
- The majority of members (over 85%) were content with the existing rates of travel and subsistence allowances, and the duties for which they are paid.
- All Members who responded were supportive of the principle of paying travel and subsistence payments, and out-of-pocket expenses to co-opted members (although the Council currently has no co-opted members);
- 100% of members felt that allowance payments should cease to any member who has been suspended;
- The great majority of members (over 85%) support the Council's Childcare and Dependant Carers Allowance scheme.
- The majority of those who responded on the issue (around two thirds) thought that the allowances currently paid to the Mayor and Deputy were adequate and should continue at the same level; but most members supported a move to paying these allowances on a monthly basis.
- Data provided by members on estimates of the costs they incurred on IT equipment and running costs, telephone and connection costs, printing costs etc. varied greatly, with some estimates with the notional £800 per annum figure which is included within the BA, but others substantially in excess of this.

The Basic Allowance (BA)

12. Given the level of satisfaction with the level of the Basic Allowance (BA) expressed in the survey, our inclination was to maintain the Basic Allowance at its current level.
13. This view was based on our perception that:
 - the number of hours of members' input assumed in previous IRP reports (i.e. 728 hours per annum) still appears valid,
 - the principle of a proportion of those hours (45%) not being remunerated and treated as a voluntary contribution was still supported, and
 - (therefore) the total remunerated time input should be 400 hours per year.

In addition, earnings data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) confirmed that average hourly pay rates for employees in the Test Valley area had not increased since 2010.

14. We did, however, examine closely the levels of expenditure members reported on IT equipment and running costs, telephone and connection costs, printing costs etc in some depth. (Following the demise of the separate communications allowance in 2007, the BA is now intended to cover all the basic costs of being a Councillor, including these elements of expenditure. However, it is still possible to identify a notional sum of £800 within the BA for these costs).
15. As already noted, the estimates of costs incurred on these elements of expenditure varied considerably, but there was no clear evidence or indication that all members were experiencing costs in excess of the notional £800. In addition, having looked at the reported costs carefully and assessed what was necessary for effective performance, we were satisfied that £800 was adequate to meet costs in this area.
16. **On this basis, we agreed to recommend that the BA should:**
 - **Remain at its current level (£6313); but**
 - **Continue to be subject to the existing indexation arrangements, so that any increases to reflect national pay awards between now and next May should be applied to the BA which would be payable from 7th May 2015 onwards.** (We noted that the national pay award due in April 2014 had not yet been agreed, and that another award would potentially be due in April 2015.)

Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

17. The questionnaire survey revealed that, for the most part, the current provisions on which roles should receive SRAs, and the amounts of those SRAs, had the support of most Councillors. Against this background we could see little justification in a wholesale review of the distribution and amounts of SRAs.
18. Retention of the “no more than one SRA per member” rule also makes obvious sense.
19. There were, however, 5 specific issues which needed our attention:
 - The SRA payable to the Chairman of Licensing;
 - The SRA payable to the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee;
 - The payment of SRAs to Vice-Chairmen of Committees;
 - Possible payment to SRAs to Overview and Scrutiny lead members;
 - Possible payments of SRAs in respect of appointments to outside bodies.
20. With regard to the **SRA payable to the Chair of Licensing**, we received evidence of the changing workload of the Licensing Committee, with a marked reduction in the number of meetings from the previous peak. We took the view that the work of the Chairman was not now as extensive as those of the Chairs of the Planning Committees (although still more demanding than some other roles attracting SRAs). On this basis, **we agreed to recommend reducing the SRA payable to the Chairman of the Licensing Committee to 0.6 times the BA.** (This recommendation will also have a knock-on effect on the SRA payable to the Vice-Chairman of the Licensing Committee.)
21. With regard to the **payment of SRAs to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the General Purposes Committee**, we noted that no payments were currently being made as the Leader and Deputy Leader were fulfilling these roles. However, this might not be the case in future, so that the question of an SRA payment for these roles was still a valid one.

22. Having considered the potential importance of the role, in terms of responsibility for workforce matters, for audit and for ethical issues, we concluded that **the Allowances Scheme should continue to provide for an SRA for the Chair of the General Purposes at the current level of 0.33 times the BA** (with the existing pro-rata payment for the Vice Chair.)
23. The practice of **paying SRAs to all Committee Vice-Chairs**, although not followed by all Councils, appears well supported at Test Valley (around 80% of survey respondents supported their payment), and we received evidence that the role of Vice-Chair involved elements of work in planning for meetings, being ready to take the Chair at short notice, and acting as a “sounding board” for the Chairman in relation to the handling of difficult issues. **On this basis, we agreed to continue to recommend that SRAs should be payable to all Vice-Chairmen, at the level of 20% of the SRA paid to the relevant Chairman.**
24. We were appreciative of the work undertaken by members who took on **lead roles within Overview and Scrutiny**. But we noted that:
 - These roles did not feature in the Council’s constitution but were a *modus operandi* with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which could easily be changed;
 - The roles were transient and “task and finish” in nature, and, therefore, the responsibilities of the members undertaking them were fluid, variable and subject to change;
 - The workload attaching to the different lead roles would vary considerably.
25. On this basis, and bearing in mind the guidance to panels that the payment of SRAs to more than 50% of the elected members on a Council would be rightly questioned by the local electorate, we **agreed not to recommend SRA payments to those undertaking lead roles within Overview and Scrutiny**
26. With regard to **service on outside bodies**, we were provided with information of the large number of organisations to which the Council appoints representatives, and reminded ourselves that service on a small number of outside bodies was an implied part of the role of every Councillor. **We therefore could not recommend the payment of SRAs for service on any outside bodies.**
27. As a result of the decisions set out in the preceding paragraphs the SRAs we are recommending from 7th May 2015 are:

Role:	SRA payable
Leader of Council	1.9 x BA
Deputy Leader	1.3 x BA
Portfolio Holders	1.21 x BA
Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	1 x BA
Chairman of Planning Control Committee	0.75 x BA
Chairmen of Area Planning Committees (x 2)	0.75 x BA
Chairman of Licensing Committee	0.6 x BA
Minority Opposition Group Leader	0.45 x BA
Chairman of Council	0.45 x BA
Chairman of General Purposes Committee	0.33 x BA
Vice-Chairmen of Area Planning Committees (x 2)	20% of Chairman’s SRA
Vice-Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	20% of Chairman’s SRA
Vice-Chairman of Planning Control Committee	20% of Chairman’s SRA
Vice-Chairman of Licensing Committee	20% of Chairman’s SRA
Vice-Chairman of Council	20% of Chairman’s SRA
Vice-Chairman of General Purposes Committee	20% of Chairman’s SRA

Pro-rata'ing of SRAs

28. We re-iterate our support for the existing provision in the Councils scheme of allowances to the effect that the pro-rata'ing of SRAs should be applied in the context of long-term illness.
29. The provision in the Regulations which permits such pro-rata'ing should be applied automatically where the member concerned is prevented from undertaking all or most of the duties covered by the SRA for a period of more than a calendar month by illness.
30. By the same token, it is logical that a member who takes on the duties covered by an SRA for a continuous period of a month or more, when another member is ill, should be entitled to receive the SRA, *pro rata*, for the period in question.

Child Care and Dependent Carers allowance

31. The Council has accepted previous recommendations that the members allowances scheme should include provision for a dependent carers allowance, which is designed to help members meet the cost of having their children and other dependents cared for whilst they are undertaking formal Council duties. Although take-up has been very low, the retention of such a scheme had strong support in the survey. We concur with this, as we believe that the scheme still has some role to play in enabling a wider cross-section of the community to consider becoming Councillors.
32. We therefore recommend that a Child Care and Dependant Carers Allowance continue to be included in the Council's allowances scheme, and should operate on the same principles as previously, viz
 - Making payment towards the costs necessarily incurred by a member in engaging a carer to look after children or other dependants who live at the same address as the member, when the member is absent from home undertaking any of the duties set out in Regulation 7 (1) (a) to (h) of the Regulations
 - Precluding any payment if the caring is undertaken by a member of the Councillor's own immediate family (e.g. spouse, partner, older child or grandparent)
 - Limiting the maximum level of payment in any one week to a maximum of 8 hours or the duration of 2 meetings (whichever is the lesser period).
33. We made a check on whether the level of payment available under the scheme was in line with current rates for childcare, and concluded that it would usually be possible for members to obtain a full refund of childcare costs under the scheme. We therefore recommend that, from May 2015, the maximum hourly amount that Councillors could seek to have reimbursed under the scheme should continue at the current rate of £12.14 per hour, subject to any CPI rating in April 2015.

Travel and subsistence allowances

34. We divided our consideration of travel and subsistence allowances into two issues—first, the range of “approved” duties for which they are paid; and, second, the rates at which they are paid.
35. On the first point, “**approved duties**”, we received no evidence that any change was required

36. With regard to the **rates of subsistence allowances**, we noted that 100% of members regard the current rates as acceptable, and therefore recommend that the current rates of
- Daytime (more than 4 hours away, ending before 7pm): £6.62
 - Evening (more than 4 hours away, ending after 7pm): £11.59
- should be retained in the new allowances scheme, subject to any CPI-based up-rating to be applied in April 2015.
37. With regard to the **rate of travel allowances**, we noted that the standard mileage payment of 45p per mile for cars (in line with the HMRC approved cost of operating a such vehicle), the equivalent rates for motorcycles and bicycles (24 p and 20p per mile, respectively) and the 5p passenger rate were supported by almost all members, and we recommend:
- that these rates be continued in the scheme of allowances after May 2015; and
 - that the rates for these allowances be indexed to and increased in line with the HMRC approved figure for “per mile” costs.
38. We recommend that the other aspects of the Council’s current travel allowance rates, relating to travel by public transport, taxi, air etc. be continued unchanged in the allowance scheme after May 2015.
39. As the non-vehicular travel allowances are based around reimbursement of actual cost, there is no need for any indexation arrangement.
40. A further element of the scheme is the limit on the costs of overnight accommodation where members book this directly. This is currently set at £149.04, so that, if members book more expensive accommodation, they have to fund the difference from their own pocket. We recommend that this limit be retained in the 2015 allowances scheme, at the same level, subject to any CPI-based adjustments in April 2015.
41. At the same time, we recommend that:
- wherever possible, the Council books accommodation on behalf of members, so that the problem does not arise.
 - **where exceptional circumstances justify it**, the Head of Administration should be able to authorise reimbursement of the cost of accommodation which has been booked directly by members and is more than the limit.

Allowances for co-opted members

42. The Member Allowances Regulations potentially allow the Council to provide for payments to co-opted members in its scheme of allowances. Currently, the Council has no co-opted members, although there are independent persons.
43. Nonetheless, it is possible that co-opted members could be appointed within the lifetime of the new scheme, and the questionnaire survey showed clear support for current provision for the payment of travel and subsistence allowances to any co-opted members in respect of attending meetings etc at the same rates which apply to Councillors, plus the re-imbursement of any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses they have incurred in order to avoid actual or potential financial loss (subject to the approval of the Council’s Head of Administration).
44. We therefore recommend that such a provision is replicated in the new scheme of allowances from May 2015.

Indexation of allowances

45. We support the Council's use of the indexation provisions in the Regulations, so that it is only necessary to revise the scheme of allowances every four years, coinciding with the Council's electoral cycle.
46. We can see no reason to change the current indexing arrangements, and therefore recommend their continuation::
- The BA and SRAs should be increased in line with any overall percentage increases awarded to employees by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services (but not to reflect any increases which Test Valley Borough Council may opt to pay its employees which are additional to those agreed by the NJC.).
 - Travel allowances should be increased in line with HMRC approved costs (see above).
 - All other allowances, should be increased on 1st April each year by the same percentage as the increase in the Consumer Prices Index for the preceding September. (For clarity, an increase should be applied in April 2015, and the relevant allowances in the new scheme should include this increase).

Ceasing payments of allowances to members who have been suspended

47. Whilst the new Regulations do not require us to make a recommendation on this issue, we reiterate our support for the Council to making full use of the ability to withhold or recover allowances from members who have been suspended or disqualified.

Financial implications

48. Given the limited extent of the change between the current scheme and the new one we are recommending, the change in expenditure as a result of implementing the new scheme is likely to be very small.

Mechanism for SRAs in relation to new Committees etc.

49. As the allowances scheme the panel is recommending is expected to last for 4 years, there is always a possibility that, during that period, the Council may constitute new Committees and/or new roles, and that a question will then arise as to whether an SRA is warranted for new Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen etc.
50. The best way of dealing with such a situation will be via a brief meeting of the IRP if and when it arises. Given modern communications, decisions over any issue could be made quickly and easily, without the need for a formal meeting – e.g. through e-mail exchanges.

Accountability

51. Previous panels have expressed concerns that, under the statutory regime for member allowances which has been in place since 2001, there was a risk that certain members might claim their BA entitlement, but fail to undertake their duties adequately.

52. We reviewed meeting attendance figures for all members, and were concerned that attendance rates were below 40% in a number of instances, suggesting that this risk remains a real one.
53. The Council has already agreed to implement some measures to guard against such risk, the main one being compiling raw figures showing the proportion of possible meetings members had actually attended, These figures have then been used privately– i.e. they have been supplied to the party leaders so that they could take any remedial action – as well being provided to any member of the public who requests them..
54. We now feel that, in view of the recent attendance rates, the Council should not only continue with the practice of compiling such figures, but **should publish the resultant figures annually in table format on its website**, commencing with figures for 2015/16, and then adding figures for the next three years, until the next IRP review of allowances.
55. Our reasons for making this recommendation are:
- It will help improve accountability to a small extent;
 - The increasing public expectations of transparency in all aspects of local government;
 - The fact that the data can, in any case, be assembled by a member of the public (if they have the time or inclination) from the published minutes of meetings;
56. We recognise that the publication of such figures is a crude measure of member performance, which can easily give a false impression.
57. Therefore:
- In publishing figures, the Council should remind the public that attendance at meetings is not the only measure of a member's effectiveness and that there may be a number of reasons why members were unable to attend meetings, including because they were attending to other Councillor duties of equal or greater priority. The figures should therefore not be seen as in any way definitive of a Councillor's effectiveness nor of the time they devote to their role.
 - It is important that attendance figures are presented in terms of actual numbers of meetings attended/not attended, not percentages, which can themselves be misleading.
 - It would be helpful if any table published had a facility to indicate extenuating circumstances for non-attendance – e.g. long-term illness.

Mayoral Allowance

58. As well as recommending a new allowances scheme under the 2003 Regulations, the panel was also asked to examine the current allowances paid to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to cover their expenses, and to recommend the future level of these allowances.
59. The current allowances are set at a level to provide a gross allowance £15,000 and £5,500 for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor respectively.
60. In the course of our meeting, we were able to speak to the current Mayor and a number of former mayors about the adequacy of otherwise of these allowances, which have been at a similar level for many years.

61. The outcome of these discussions gave a mixed picture, with some members indicating that they had decided or been obliged to supplement the allowance from their own funds during their year as Mayor, and others indicating that, with care and creativity, the allowance was adequate to enable the Mayor to operate effectively in representing the Council and maintaining its public profile.
62. Our overall conclusion, however, is that the allowances remain sufficient to support the roles.
63. **We therefore recommend that the allowances for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in 2015/16, and subsequent years through to 2018, should be set at the current level of £15,000 and £5,500 respectively.** (We felt that, to keep pressure on future Mayors and Deputies to derive the best possible value from the allowances, there should be no indexation or up-rating of the allowances over the next 4 years.)
64. We were offered convincing arguments for these allowances being paid in monthly instalments, rather than on the present system, and we recommend that they be paid in this way from May 2015 onwards.

Future meetings of the IRP

65. The Member Allowances Regulations allow the Council to continue to operate a scheme of allowances implemented following a recommendation from its IRP for up to four years (with indexation), before seeking fresh recommendations from the IRP.
66. We recommend that the Council should take full advantage of this provision, and should therefore schedule a full review of all allowances by the Independent Review Panel in summer/autumn 2018 (with a view to recommending a revised allowance scheme for implementation from May 2019), unless members wish allowances to be reviewed again at an earlier stage, or there are changes in the Council's organisation or structure which require an earlier review of the current scheme by the IRP.

Acknowledgments

67. We are grateful to all those Councillors who completed and returned questionnaires and, particularly, to those who attended our meetings, answered our questions and gave us their views
68. We would like to thank the Council's Head of Administration, Tom van der Hoven, for his support and advice in outlining some of the issues affecting allowances and helping us arrive at our recommendations.
69. We would especially like to thank Caroline Lovelock for organising our meeting and arranging the interviews with members, for undertaking the questionnaire survey on our behalf and analysing the results, for providing us with comprehensive background documents, and for generally advising and looking after us during the 2 days of our meeting.