

# Report of the Independent Panel - Recommendations of the Remuneration of Councillors in London 2018

### Level of Basic Allowance

We reluctantly accept that, in the current financial climate, it would be inappropriate to recommend a general increase in members' allowances (beyond the annual updating). Pegging an annual increase to staff pay awards will ensure that councillors can receive annual increases which are in line with those received by staff. We therefore recommend that the Basic Allowance be set at £11,045. We believe that it remains sensible to frame recommendations which are common across London.

### Special Responsibility Allowances

For the same reasons which prompt us to peg the Basic Allowance, we recommend that the special responsibility allowance for a Leader should be in accordance with our former recommendation, plus the subsequent local government staff pay awards, i.e. £57,085.

### Interpretation of the Scheme

We reiterate our view that no more than 50% of councillors should receive a special responsibility allowance.

We also continue to believe that no member should receive more than one special responsibility allowance though we accept that there might exceptionally be special circumstances where allocation of more than one Special Responsibility Allowance might be justified, e.g. where members undertake a number of different time-consuming roles such as sitting on licensing hearings.

### Training and Support

The responsibilities of councillors are substantial, extensive and complex. We have mentioned the Grenfell Tower tragedy as a chilling instance of those responsibilities. We believe that every borough should have an ongoing programme of member training and development and that members should be expected to participate.

We believe that members should be provided with logistical and clerical support to help them deal with their workload.

### Barriers to being a councillor

- **Allowance for care of dependents.**

It is important that obstacles to becoming a councillor should be removed wherever possible. Child care costs can be a significant deterrent to service as a councillor. We repeat our strong view that in appropriate cases when they undertake their council duties, councillors should be entitled to claim an allowance for care of dependents.

- **Dependents' carers' allowance**

The dependents' carers' allowance should be set at the London living wage but (on presentation of proof of expense) payment should be made at a higher rate when specialist nursing skills are required.

- **Special Responsibility Allowances in the case of sickness, maternity and paternity leave**

We also repeat our belief that members' allowances schemes should allow the continuance of Special Responsibility Allowances in the case of sickness, maternity and paternity leave in the same terms that the council's employees enjoy such benefits (that is to say, they follow the same policies).

### **Travel and Subsistence allowances**

We continue to believe that the Basic Allowance should cover basic out-of-pocket expenses incurred by councillors, including intra-borough travel costs and expenses. The members' allowances scheme should, however, provide for special circumstances, such as travel after late meetings or travel by councillors with disabilities. The scheme should enable councillors to claim travel expenses when their duties take them out of their home borough, including a bicycle allowance.

### **Allowances for Mayor or Civic Head**

Many councils include the allowances for the mayor (or civic head) and deputy in their members' allowance scheme. However these allowances do serve a rather different purpose from the 'ordinary' members' allowances, since they are intended to enable the civic heads to perform a ceremonial role. There are separate statutory provisions (Sections 3 and 5 of the Local Government Act 1972) for such allowances and councils may find it convenient to use those provisions rather than to include the allowances in the members' allowance scheme.

### **Update for inflation**

We continue to recommend that for a period of four years the allowances we recommend should be updated annually in accordance with the headline figure in the annual local government pay settlement.