

Report of the Independent Panel - Recommendations of the Remuneration of Councillors in London 2023

Level of Basic Allowance

In 2022, the Panel recommended that the Basic Allowance of £12,014 should be paid to every councillor. Updated for the local government staff pay awards since then brings the figure to £12,499.

The latest Independent Panel has set the Basic Allowance at £15,960. The Panel considers that this allowance better reflects the high cost of living in London, than the previous recommendations. It is also of the view that its implementation in 2024 will contribute to recruiting and retaining a diverse range of good quality candidates to stand for office in London.

Special Responsibility Allowances

The Panel has previously determined that all other SRAs are calculated as a proportion of the Leader’s SRA. It has recommended using bands rather than fixed amounts, in order to allow flexibility and recognise local variations on how the roles are performed. The proposed amounts for each band are a percentage of the figure suggested for a council leader depending upon levels of responsibility of the roles undertaken.

A snapshot of the recommended bands and levels of allowance are below.

Elected Mayor	Leader	Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member/ Scrutiny Chair	Opposition Leader/Planning Chair/Mayor	Cabinet Assistant/ Scrutiny Vice Chair
£93,575	£62,092	£37,255 - £46,569	£15,523- £31,046	£3,105 - £9,314

Training and Support

The responsibilities of councillors are substantial, extensive and complex.

The Pandemic has also resulted in an acceleration of more flexible ways of working including greater use of digital technology. While this has provided a range of benefits including less travelling for work it has required councillors to have the necessary digital skills. Additionally, the move to audio visual conferencing has resulted in a growth in meetings for many contributing to an overall increase in ‘screen time’.

We believe that every borough should:

- have an ongoing programme of member training and development
- provide members with the logistical and clerical support and the appropriate IT equipment 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. Care costs can be a significant deterrent to service as a councillor. Our strong view is 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**

Our view is 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

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 (ss 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 all allowances should be updated annually in accordance with the headline figure in the annual local government pay settlement.

The Regulations make it obligatory for the annual updating of the Scheme to be formally authorised by the council each year.