

Report of the Independent Panel - Recommendations of the Remuneration of Councillors in London 2014

Pensions

In March 2014 the Government laid before Parliament Regulations which ended the right of councillors to enter the local government pension scheme. Access to a pension scheme can be an important factor in making service as a councillor financially possible for a wider range of people. It is particularly important for those who, like elected mayors, leaders and portfolio holders, give most or all of their time to service in local government and lose the opportunity to contribute to a pension scheme elsewhere. The Government is asked to reconsider this decision.

External Paid Appointments

We believe that if members take on extra work and responsibilities through undertaking external appointments, then they should be entitled to retain the remuneration attracted by those responsibilities. The borough might reflect on the extent to which the external duties are compatible with the time required to discharge duties within the borough and adjust responsibilities accordingly.

Chair of the Health and Well Being Board

We agree that this is a statutory post conferring personal statutory responsibility. The role is of major importance to local government and should be remunerated accordingly where they are councillors.

Lead Member for Children's and Adult Services

Given the different allocation of responsibilities in different boroughs, we do not make specific recommendations on differentiating special responsibility allowances for Cabinet members within Band Three.

Sickness, Maternity and Paternity Leave

Councils should make arrangements in their members' allowances schemes to 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 all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred by councillors, including intra-borough travel costs and expenses, though councils may consider that there are circumstances where it may be appropriate for a scheme to provide payment for the cost of transport, e.g. journeys home after late meetings, and for

people with disabilities. Where travel and subsistence allowances are payable, they should be in accordance with the current scheme for travel and subsistence applicable to the Borough's staff; and that travel allowances should extend to travel by bicycle.

Members Of Social Care And Health Scrutiny Panels And Corporate Parenting Panel

We continue to recommend that the responsibility allowance payable under Band One should include membership of committees, sub-committees and adoption panels where membership requires attendance with exceptional frequency or for exceptionally long periods. If a Council believes that such memberships are substantially more onerous than service on other committees, then we agree that they would be appropriately remunerated on Band One.

Dependants' Carers' Allowance

We recognise the need for payments to have regard to local circumstances and the nature of specialist care. We believe that ordinary care should be remunerated at not less than the London living wage of £8.60 per hour and (on presentation of proof of expense) payment should be made at a higher rate when specialist nursing skills are required.

The Current Financial And Political Climate

We are acutely aware that now is not the time to increase allowances made to councillors, though we continue to recommend that members' allowances be pegged to the annual local government pay settlement. Such pegging will ensure that councillors can receive annual increases which are in line with those received by staff. We fully accept that, in the current financial climate, it would be entirely inappropriate to increase members' allowances (beyond the annual updating).

Level of Allowances

In particular, we think it appropriate that Leaders should receive an allowance approximating to the salary of a Member of Parliament.