

Buckinghamshire Council

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel

9 January 2020

1. Background

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire Council established an Independent Remuneration Panel (the Panel), in order to advise the Council on a scheme of allowances for councillors reflecting the governance arrangements and responsibilities introduced by the Local Government Act 2000.
- 1.2 This report has been prepared by the Panel for Buckinghamshire Council comprising of: Hazel Bentall, Nigel Palmer, Dr Bill Reid and Mark Tosh.
- 1.3 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the Regulations) apply to local authorities including unitary, district and county councils.
- 1.4 The Regulations require a relevant authority to make a scheme providing for the payment of a basic allowance (BA) to each member of that authority. The BA must be the same for each member of the authority.
- 1.5 A relevant authority's scheme of allowances may also provide for the payment of special responsibility allowances (SRAs) to such members of the authority as have special or additional responsibilities. The specified categories of special or additional responsibilities which may be included in a scheme of allowances include:
 - i) Acting as leader or deputy leader of a political group within the authority;
 - ii) Acting as a member of an executive where the authority is operating executive arrangements within the meaning of part 2 of the Local Government Act 2000;
 - iii) Presiding at meetings of a committee or sub-committee of the authority;
 - iv) Representing the authority at meetings of or arranged by any other body;
 - v) Acting as a member of a committee or sub-committee of the authority which meets with exceptional frequency or for exceptionally long periods;
 - vi) Acting as the spokesman of a political group on a committee or sub-committee of the authority; and
 - vii) Carrying out such other activities in relation to the discharge of the authority's functions as require of the member an amount of time and effort equal to or greater than would be required of him or her by any of the above-mentioned activities.
- 1.6 SRAs need not be the same and may reflect the different expectations, time and effort involved in particular roles.
- 1.7 Member allowance schemes may also provide for the payment of a dependent carers' allowance and also for members' travelling and subsistence whilst acting in connection with their duties as a member of the authority.
- 1.8 Before a relevant authority may make or amend a scheme of allowances it must have regard to recommendations made in relation to the scheme by an independent remuneration panel.

2. Town and Parish Council allowances

2.1 In addition to considering a scheme for Buckinghamshire Council, the Panel also considered recommendations to Town and Parish Councils across Buckinghamshire.

2.2 All Towns and Parishes were contacted by email in September 2019 and invited to submit representations and details of their respective schemes. 24 responses were received.

2.3 From the responses received it is evident that many Parish Councils pay no allowances and that the role of a Town or Parish Councillor is very much community based and time spent performing Parish Councillor duties was often viewed as voluntary. There is a wide range of towns and parishes across Buckinghamshire, with large town council's including Aylesbury, Buckingham and Chesham, amongst others through to small, rural, parishes who serve a relatively small electorate.

2.4 None of the responses indicate a need for any significant change to any respective scheme, although two respondents did make the panel aware that parishes would likely face increased pressures from services being devolved from Buckinghamshire Council.

2.5 The Panel believes that a sensible way to set a scheme would be to base recommended allowances around percentages of the unitary basic allowance which increases on the size of the electorate. This has been an approach used previously.

2.6 Towns and Parishes may choose to adopt recommendations for all members, or for the Chairman only. Where all members of a Parish receive a BA, the Chairman could receive a higher amount, up to twice that of the recommended basic allowance.

2.7 The Panel wishes to make clear that it is not recommending all towns and parishes pay an allowance to its members but recommends that those who do have regard to the panel's recommendations.

2.8 The panel recommends that where Towns and Parishes choose to implement a scheme of allowances, they have regard to the table below. Towns and Parishes may choose to adopt recommendations for all members, or for the Chairman only. Where all members of a Parish received a Basic Allowance, the Chairman could receive an amount up to twice that of the recommended allowance.

Electorate	% of Unitary Basic (£13,000)	Amount per Councillor £ (up to)	Current Parish Council Rate
0 - 2,500	1.5	£195	
2,501 – 5,000	2.5	£325	£200
5,001 – 10,000	3.5	£455	
10,001 – 15,000	4.5	£585	

2.9 Further, the Panel recommends that Town and Parish Councils pay travel and subsistence allowances at the same rates as Buckinghamshire Council, as indicated in sections 3 onwards.

3. Travel Allowances

3.1 The Panel notes that each of the relevant councils currently pays approved amounts under HMRC mileage allowance payments (MAPs). Anything payable above MAP approved amounts result in a taxable benefit to the claimant. The Panel further notes that to introduce taxable benefits into the travel allowances scheme would be a disproportionate bureaucratic burden on the authority.

3.2 The MAP approved amounts are currently:

- (a) Car – 45p per mile up to 10,000 and 25p per mile thereafter (including electrically powered);
- (b) Passenger payments – up to 5p per mile per passenger (up to a maximum of four) to be claimed only for passengers who would otherwise be eligible for travelling allowance;
- (c) Motorcycle – 24p per mile (including electrically powered);
- (d) Bicycle – 20p per mile (including electrically assisted e.g. ebike);
- (e) In relation to public transport (including rail and bus) – standard fare; and
- (f) Parking fees – actual cost

3.3 The Panel note and agree with Shadow Executive representations that sustainable methods of transport should be encouraged where possible, including use of electric/hybrid transportation.

3.4 The Panel recommends the travel allowances be paid to members:

(a) In line with MAP for undertaking official business; and

(b) Travelling to the Buckinghamshire Council offices for meetings and official business.

4. Subsistence allowances

4.1 Subsistence allowances includes the costs of:

- (a) Accommodation (if a member is required to stay overnight); and
- (b) Meals and other 'subsistence' while travelling

4.2 The Panel wishes to emphasise that subsistence should be only claimable for undertaking official business outside of the new unitary council area.

4.3 The Panel recommends the following subsistence allowances be paid to members in the case of an overnight stay away from the usual place of residence:

- (i) Breakfast £6.50 (more than 4 hours away before 11am)**
- (ii) Lunch £9 (business journeys entailing working away from normal place of work between 12 and 2pm)**
- (iii) Dinner £11.50 (can be claimed when required to work outside of usual rostered requirements and away from normal place of work after 8.30pm)**