

**THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL ON MEMBERS'
ALLOWANCES**

REPORT TO BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEMBERS: -

- ❖ Amanda Orchard

- ❖ Graham Hudson

- ❖ David Richardson

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 We, the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel (the Panel) were invited to participate by Bolsover District Council. This was done in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. These regulations require that before making or amending a Members' Allowance Scheme, the Authority must have regard to the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel.

1.2 The Panel comprises three members.

Amanda Orchard - sits as an Independent Person for a number of authorities across the country and is experienced in undertaking a number of remuneration reviews. She works in conflict resolution adjudicating complaints, sitting on fitness to practice panels for a number of healthcare regulators as well as being a trained mediator. She also sits as a JP in crime and family court.

Graham Hudson – has 38 years in HR Management at a Local Authority, was a HR lead officer for all outsourcing projects and latterly was seconded as Head of Corporate Resources for a public body. He is also an Independent Person at a neighbouring authority.

David Richardson - currently works in Higher Education and is the Student Success Facilitator at a University. Previously he was an investigator with the Local Government Ombudsman. He is also an Independent Person at a neighbouring authority.

1.3 We represent a range of disciplines and are also independent from the Authority and so are able to look at the matter of members' allowances objectively, with no self-interest. We have also been able to bring the experience of our own spheres to bear on the discussions.

1.4 We have been supplied with a range of information to consider during the formulation of our recommendations and have interviewed three Members to help with clarification around questions that arose during our deliberations.

2. THE PANEL'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 These terms of reference have been compiled with reference to The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

2.2 In accordance with regulation 21 the Independent Remuneration Panel is required to make recommendations on the Members' Allowance Scheme in the form of a report to the Authority.

- 2.3 The remit requested by Members for the 2024 review was to conduct a full review of allowances.

3. THE PANEL'S METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The Panel met on 12th December 2023 and was given the above remit.
- 3.2 The panel considered information and requested further details in order to inform its views. Further meetings took place on 1st February 2024, 7th February 2024 and 15th March 2024, to consider the requested information and formulate recommendations to Council.
- 3.3 To inform the review, the Panel considered a number of factors including:
- Figures paid by neighbouring and comparative authorities.
 - The current scheme of allowances.
 - The IRP reports from 2011, 2014 and 2017 and details of what Council agreed following the IRPs recommendations.
 - Committee Terms of Reference.
 - Information on the number of meetings held.
- 3.4 The Panel considered the Members Allowance Comparison Data, comparing Bolsover District Council with neighbouring authorities and some other similar authorities that had been used previously for comparison.

This comparative data showed Bolsover District Council as being one of the highest Allowance Schemes within the table. When referring back to previous information received comparing Bolsover District Council to the rest of Derbyshire County the BDC Allowances were the highest in terms of the Basic Allowance and mid-range for all other SRAs.

On further analysis it was noted that there were still large gaps between other authorities and Bolsover District Council, which created doubt that a justification could be made to warrant any increase to current allowances.

Table 1: Data Comparator Group – Basic Allowance (Summary)

Authority	Basic Allowance	Notes
Bolsover District Council	£9,902	
Amber Valley Borough Council	£4,210	
Ashfield District Council	£7,427	
Bassetlaw District Council	£4,981	
Broxtowe Borough Council	£4,117	
Cannock Chase District Council	£5,706	£1,224 is included in this sum for the purchase of consumables
Chesterfield Borough Council	£6,396	
Derbyshire Dales District Council	£4,628	
Erewash Borough Council	£4,321	
Mansfield District Council	£6,386	
North East Derbyshire District Council	£5,488	
High Peak Borough Council	£3,217	
South Derbyshire District Council	£7,435	

Table 2: Data Comparator Group – SRAs (Summary)

Authority	Leader SRA	Exec Member	Scrutiny Chair	Planning Chair	Licensing Chair
Bolsover District Council	£14,672	£4,981	£3,260	£4,890	£3,260
Amber Valley Borough Council	£12,632	£4,391	n/a	£2,526	£1,674
Ashfield District Council	£21,950	£12,453	£6,226	£8,302	£4,151
Bassetlaw District Council	£8,083	£5,741	£3,178	£3,178	£2,153
Broxtowe Borough Council	£14,981	£5,222	£5,222	£5,222	£5,222
Cannock Chase District Council	£19,403	£8,578	£2,138	£4,619	£1,982
Chesterfield Borough Council	£6,396	£29,632	£4,885	£5,912	£4,885
Derbyshire Dales District Council	£13,910	n/a	£2,782	£5,564	£2,782
Erewash Borough Council	£14,320	£6,444	£3,792	£3,792	£3,792
Mansfield District Council	£49,377	£13,828	£6,921	£9,588	£7,505
North East Derbyshire District Council	£20,522	£9,405	£4,490	£8,256	£4,490
High Peak Borough Council	£9,905	£4,456	n/a	£2,970	£600
South Derbyshire District Council	£19,653	n/a	£9,815	£9,815	£4,865

3.5 Two interviews were conducted during the course of the IRP meetings.

- ❖ Cllr Will Fletcher
- ❖ Cllr Tom Munro

One Councillor, Cllr Justin Gilbody, was unable to attend an interview but responded to the Panel's questions in writing.

These interviews put a number of questions to the Members concerned in regard to areas within the remit of the review, factors which may affect allowances, and queried anomalies in the Panel's understanding to ensure that the information provided created an accurate overall picture.

The Panel as a whole wish to express its thanks to the Members for taking the time to consider the questions put and for the clarity brought to our queries.

- 3.6 In making its recommendations the Panel acknowledged the current economic circumstances and that there had been cost of living increases and high inflation since the previous review.
- 3.7 The Panel also took into consideration the information presented by those interviewed regarding the time commitment required as a Councillor. It was noted that the opinion of some Councillors was that the workload and the number of hours spent on Council duties is significant.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Basic Allowance

- 4.1 The Panel considered the level of Basic Allowance. This is an allowance paid to all Councillors of the authority. The Basic Allowance is currently £9902.44.

The Panel considered that the level of Basic Allowance had remained the same for some time. This was largely in part due to it being much higher in comparison to other local authorities. The Panel considered that it was still higher compared to other local authorities and that nothing had significantly changed since the last review of allowances. The Panel considered the increase in the cost of living and weighed this against the level of Basic Allowance which was still high compared to elsewhere. Therefore, the Panel recommended that the level of the Basic Allowance remain unchanged.

RECOMMENDATION: No change to the level of Basic Allowance.

Special Responsibility Allowance

- 4.2 The Panel considered the level of Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA). This is an allowance paid to those Members who hold special responsibilities.

A Special Responsibility Allowance is currently paid to the following:

Leader of the Authority	£14,672.16
Deputy Leader of the Authority	£9,781.44
Members of the Executive	£4,890.72
Chair of a Scrutiny Committee	£3,260.48
Vice Chair of a Scrutiny Committee	£1,630.24
Largest Opposition Political Group Leader	£4,980.72
Chair of Planning Committee	£4,980
Vice Chair of Planning Committee	£2,445
Chair of Licensing Committee	£3,260.48
Vice Chair of Licensing Committee	£1,630.24
Chair of Standards Committee (co-optee)	£1,222
Chair of Audit Committee	£1,467
Junior Executive Members	£2,445.36

4.3 The Panel noted that the SRA paid to Junior Executive Members had only been put in place in 2023, and the Panel saw no reason to make any changes to this. During consideration of the recommendation regarding paying an SRA to Junior Executive Members the Panel had considered the number of posts in receipt of a SRA.

4.4 The Panel heard that historically, the level of SRA had been lower as the Basic Allowance was higher. The Panel did not consider that anything had changed with regard to this position.

The Panel did not consider that it had been presented with any evidence to justify an increase to any Special Responsibility Allowance.

4.5 The Panel considered that the provision in the current scheme, that no member shall be entitled to receive more than one Special Responsibility Allowance, remain unchanged.

RECOMMENDATION: No change to the level of Special Responsibility Allowance.

Other Parts of the Allowances Scheme

4.5 The Panel considered the other elements of the Allowances Scheme, such as travelling allowance and subsistence reimbursement, co-optees' allowance, and carer's dependents allowance. The Panel considered that the current provisions all seemed reasonable and recommended no changes.

Considerations for the next review of Councillors' Allowances

- 4.6 The Panel, as part of its deliberations, considered whether to recommend a mechanism to increase the level of allowances in the future. The Panel considered that as the level of Basic Allowance was still high compared to elsewhere that there should be a further review before any mechanism to increase allowances annually was agreed.
- 4.7 The Panel considered that another review of allowances should take place in 3 to 4 years unless there was a particular need to address something within that period. It was noted that a review in three years would align with the District Council elections.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Councillors' Allowances Scheme be reviewed again in 3 to 4 years.