

East Devon District Council Independent Remuneration Panel

Report to Council 6 December 2023

Review of Members Allowances

Summary of Recommendations.

- 1 We recommend that the Basic Allowance for East Devon District Councillors should be increased to £5,260, representing the average Basic Allowance from our benchmarked councils
- 2 We recommend that the increase to the Basic Allowance should be backdated to the May 2023 election.
- 3 We recommend an increase to the Special Responsibility Allowance based on the average benchmark for equivalent posts in councils we benchmarked, except;
 - Where a post with a benchmarked increase is higher than the NJC index (5) it will be capped at the NJC increase.
 - Where a post with a benchmark percentage increase would be lower than currently graded or is not replicated within the benchmarked councils (7) it will receive the NJC increase.
- 4 We recommend that these increases to the Special Responsibility Allowance should be backdated to the 1st June 2023.
- 5 We recommend that if a member, with the agreement of the Leader of the Council, is acting in a capacity of a cabinet or portfolio holder for a significant period due to the incumbent being absent through sickness or extended leave of absence, that individual should, if not in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance, be paid the full agreed amount of the incumbent Special Responsibility Allowance. If they are already in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance and continue to receive it they should receive 50% of the Special Responsibility Allowance for that new post/responsibility.
- 6 We recommend that the Basic Allowance should increase each year on the 1st May beginning May 2024 and Special Responsibility Allowance should increase each year on 1st June beginning in 2024 in line with the average of the agreed National Joint Council Pay Award for staff. This index should be reviewed every 4 years.
- 7 We recommend that there are no changes to the current Travel Rates and Subsistence Allowances for Councillors at this time as they are aligned to EDDC staff allowances.
- 8 We recommend that there are no changes to the current Child Care and Dependants' Carers' Allowance.
- 9 We recommend that all Co-optees on the Housing Review Board should be in receipt of an annual allowance in addition to their travel expense.
- 10 We recommend that an annual allowance be introduced in line with the views of Democratic Services and Home Office guidance from 1st May 2024. These allowances should be reviewed after 4 years.

Housing Review Board	£550
Standards Committee	£400
Independent Remuneration Panel	£400

East Devon District Council Independent Remuneration Panel

Report to Council 18th October 2023

Review of Members Allowances

The Role of the Independent Remuneration Panel

The role of the Independent Remuneration Panel is to make recommendations about the level of Basic Allowance for all Members, the level of Special Responsibility Allowance, and whether Dependants' Carers' Allowance, Travel and Subsistence Allowance and Co-optees Allowance should be paid, and the levels of these allowances.

Why do we need a review of allowances?

It is important that our Councillors are representative of the diverse range of the electorate and that local government is responsive, accountable, and effective in meeting the needs of the community.

'Local Authority Councillors are significantly unrepresentative of the population as a whole. The latest findings from the 2006 Census of Local Authority Councillors revealed that 69.3 per cent of Councillors in England are male (compared to 48.0 per cent of the adult population) and 95.9 per cent are white (compared to 90.5 per cent of the adult population). The average age of Councillors is 58.3. This profile is indicative of a democratic deficit in town halls. Today's Councillors are not recruited from across the social spectrum. Rather, they are drawn disproportionately from certain sections of society'¹.

Whilst there are a number of barriers to individuals putting themselves forward for election one significant barrier has been recognised as allowances paid to Members. Election to office as a Councillor is purely a voluntary role and Councillors are not employees of the East Devon District Council. Allowances are paid in recognition that Local Authority Councillors receive allowances to compensate them for their time and effort. These allowances are intended to enable individuals from various backgrounds to serve their communities without facing financial hardship. The goal is to strike a balance between supporting Councillors' service and responsible financial management.

The reasons for providing allowances to local authority Councillors include:

- **Time Commitment:** Serving as a Councillor is often a significant time commitment. Councillors attend meetings, participate in committees, engage with constituents, and deal with various local issues. This can require a considerable amount of time, which might impact their ability to hold other full-time employment.
- **Public Service:** Being a Councillor involves public service and community representation. By offering allowances, it encourages a diverse range of people to run for office, including those who may not be able to afford to do so without financial support.
- **Equity and Accessibility:** Without allowances, only individuals with other independent sources of income might be able to afford to dedicate their time to public service. Offering allowances ensures that the role of Councillor is accessible to people from different socio-economic backgrounds.
- **Expertise and Diversity:** Encouraging individuals with various skills, backgrounds, and perspectives to become Councillors can lead to more informed and balanced decision-making. Providing allowances helps attract a wider range of candidates.
- **Expenses:** Councillors often have to cover expenses related to attending meetings, travelling within their constituency, or engaging with constituents. Allowances help offset these costs.

¹ Understanding the barriers and incentives to becoming and remaining a councillor in England, Tony Bovaird, 2007

- **Full-Time Commitment:** Some Councillors may choose to dedicate themselves full-time to their role, especially in larger local authorities. In such cases, allowances can serve as a form of income to support their commitment.
- **Independence:** Adequate allowances can help Councillors remain independent from outside influences, as they won't be as reliant on external income sources.

Members allowances are set in accordance with The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. These regulations set out a requirement for a Basic Allowance (paid to all elected Councillors), a Special Responsibility Allowance (paid to Councillors with additional responsibilities), Travel and Subsistence, Dependant Carers' and Co-optees to the Council.

The 2003 Regulations require the East Devon District Council to establish an Independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations as to the level of allowances Councillors receive, and that these should be kept under review.

Background to this review

The current Basic Allowance (£4,360) and the Special Responsibility Allowances (with some minor changes to some Special Responsibility Allowances, following changes in Council structures) were set in 2008. Allowances were reviewed annually up to 2017 and no changes were made, other than minor changes to Special Responsibility Allowances as mentioned above.

At the November 2017 Cabinet meeting concern was expressed at the level of allowances and it was recommended '*the Independent Remuneration Panel reconvene to include cross-party participation to reassess Members basic Allowances. Democratic Services would arrange a future date for this meeting to take place.*' (*Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet, 1st November 2017, para 102*). There is no record of the then Independent Remuneration Panel meeting in response to this minute.

It was agreed in 2022 that new Independent Remuneration Panel members should be appointed to conduct a review of current allowances to ensure that we were engaging with a wide and diverse range of potential Councillors and that the existing Councillors are appropriately remunerated for their voluntary role. The current East Devon Independent Remuneration Panel was appointed in January 2023 with a view to review the allowances paid to EDDC Councillors. This report, with recommendations, is a direct result of that 2022 agreement and the work of the panel in 2023.

Review Process

The Independent Remuneration Panel were initially provided with details of the current allowance scheme and the constitution of the council.

A Benchmarking Exercise was conducted which included 11 councils similar in size and population and geographically close councils.

A questionnaire was sent to all serving Councillors in March 2023. There were 21 responses (35%). Four key issues were identified;

Key Issue 1

18 (86%) respondents felt that the Basic Allowance of an EDDC Councillor (currently £4,360) was too low, with only 3 believing it was about right.

18 respondents felt that the Basic Allowance of an EDDC Councillor presents a barrier to some individuals who may wish to stand for re-election/election with only 3 believing it does not act as a barrier.

- Public expectation of the role of an elected official is far higher.

- Modern technology and social media have raised the expectation that replies and correspondence should be dealt with straight away.
- Social media and the internet have made it impossible to 'switch off' from the role.
- More residents are well informed and increasingly critical of elected representatives.
- Increased demand and workload as more responsibilities are devolved from County and National Government.
- Significant population growth, particularly in the west of the district has brought additional pressures.
- Public awareness of active issues (such as climate change growth) has meant that councils need to be more proactive.

Key Issue 2

14 respondents (67%) felt that the role of an EDDC Councillor has changed significantly in recent years with 6 feeling that there has been little change. 16 respondents (76%) foresee the role of an EDDC Councillor changing over the next 4 years.

Respondents who believed that the role of an EDDC Councillor has changed significantly felt that:

- The duties of elected Members are onerous and time consuming.
- It does not encourage younger people with families to seek election.
- It does not encourage diversity amongst Councillors.
- Individuals on lower income cannot commit the time to carry out duties.

Key Issue 3

14 respondents (67%) did not believe that the Special Responsibility Allowance was set at a fair level, whilst 6 felt it was fair.

- If the Basic Allowance was increased then so should the Special Responsibility Allowance.
- SRA holders commit a lot of energy and time to the role, to the point where it is considered a full-time job for some.
- Some Vice Chairs are undervalued and under remunerated.
- Cabinet membership is a demanding role, with many responsibilities.
- It is recognised that some portfolios are more time consuming than others.
- Some current SRAs feel excessive for the actual role performed.

Key Issue 4

19 respondents (90%) believe a Councillor covering the Special Responsibilities of another Councillor, due to a period of long-term absence (eg. sickness, parental absence) should receive a SRA if they are not in receipt of one, or an uplift in the SRA if one is additionally currently received.

- This was felt by most to be a question of fairness.
- Organisationally it would assist in the management of portfolios.

Interviews

All 60 Councillors were invited to an on-line interview with Members of the panel, within their political groups. Some 29 Councillors across four of the political groups were able to take up this invitation.

This was followed with face-to-face interviews with the Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and Chair of the Council.

Review Findings

Basic Allowance

A Basic Allowance is paid to all elected Councillors regardless of any portfolio or other responsibilities. The Basic Allowance is currently set at £4,360 per annum and has remained unchanged since 2008. 67% of respondents to our questionnaire felt that the Basic Allowance was too low, and we agree.

There are, in our view, three key indices to consider when assessing allowances, the National Joint Council Annual Staff Pay Award, Consumers Price Index and benchmarking of local and demographically similar councils. Our analysis identified 11 councils that are geographically close to, or similar to, East Devon District Council.

National Joint Council Pay Awards

The pay awards made through the NJC process for East Devon District Council employees between 2012-2022 have seen pay increases of 22.55% on a compounded basis. The picture is complicated as some of the increases have been different for various grades and in 2022 there was a cash sum of £1,925 applied. The average percentage increases and the equivalent increase to allow for a cash sum has been calculated by Payroll and Pensions.

Table 1 - NJC Annual Increase 2012/13 - 2022

Year	NJC Pay Award
2012/13	0%
2013/14	1%
2014/15	0%
01/01/2015	2.2%
2016/17	1%
2017/18	1%
2018/19	2%
2019/20	2%
2020/21	2.75%
2021/22	1.75%
2022/23	7% (£1,925 Cash Sum)
Annual Compounded Increase	22.55%
NJC revised Basic Allowance	£5,343

If we applied the NJC increase to the Basic Allowance over the period 2012-2022, it would equate to a revised allowance of £5,343 from today's level of £4,360.

Consumer Prices Index

CPI rates since 2013-2022 have seen annual increases in inflation. Over this period, on a compounded basis to April 2022, this inflationary increase is 25.1%.

Table 2 - CPI Annual Increase 2013 - 2022

Year	April Consumer Price Index
2013	2.4%
2014	1.8%
2015	-0.1%
2016	0.3%
2017	2.7%
2018	2.4%
2019	2.1%
2020	0.8%
2021	1.5%
2022	9.0%
Annual Compounded Increase	25.1%
CPI revised Basic Allowance	£5,454

If applied to the Basic Allowance over the period 2012-2022, it would equate to a revised allowance of £5,454 from today's level of £4,360.

Benchmarking Data

Our benchmarking exercise for 11 local and similar councils show an average Basic Allowance of £5,260, the highest (Exeter) at £6,537 and the lowest (South Lakeland) at £4,201. East Devon District Council is currently second from the bottom at £4,360.

Table 3 - Benchmarked councils in ranked order of Basic Allowance.

	Council	Basic Allowance
1	Exeter	£6,537
2	North Norfolk	£5,905
3	South Hams	£5,492

	Council	Basic Allowance
4	North Devon	£5,171
5	Torridge	£5,472
6	Adur & Worthing	£5,454
7	Mid Devon	£5,403
8	Chichester	£5,200
9	West Devon	£4,660
10	East Devon	£4,360
11	South Lakeland	£4,201
	Average	£5,260

It is important to understand that

- Information for the benchmark councils was based upon the latest information published on their websites. In all cases the allowances were set in the last 2-3 years, with most set for 2022/23 and two for 2023/24.
- Local councils to EDDC included in the exercise are; South Hams, North Devon, Mid Devon, West Devon, and Torridge.
- Other comparable councils included in the benchmark exercise are; North Norfolk, South Lakeland, Exeter, Adur and Worthing, and Chichester.
- In terms of population per Councillor (taken from the 2021 census), the average for the benchmark councils is 2,500, which is almost identical to EDDC at 2,513 per Councillor.
- Details such as the number of wards, meetings to attend, travel times, distances travelled or workload are not included in the exercise.

If the benchmark average was applied it would place East Devon District Council at no 8 in the list, still below the revised mean average of £5,431 for the 11 benchmarked councils.

Table 4 Benchmarked councils ranked in order of Basic Allowance following possible increase.

	Council	Basic Allowance
1	Exeter	£6,537
2	North Norfolk	£5,905
3	South Hams	£5,492
4	North Devon	£5,171
5	Torridge	£5,472
6	Adur & Worthing	£5,454

	Council	Basic Allowance
7	Mid Devon	£5,403
8	EDDC	£5,260
9	Chichester	£5,200
10	West Devon	£4,660
11	South Lakeland	£4,201
	Revised Average	£5,431

Recommendation.

- 1 We recommend that the Basic Allowance for East Devon District Councillors should be increased to £5,260, representing the average Basic Allowance from our benchmarked councils.**
- 2 We recommend that the increase to the Basic Allowance should be backdated to the May 2023 election.**

Special Responsibility Allowance

A Special Responsibility Allowance is an additional payment provided to Councillors who hold specific positions of responsibility or who undertake particular roles within the Council.

The purpose of a Special Responsibility Allowance is to recognise the additional time, effort, and expertise required by individuals who hold key positions and to encourage individuals to take on these responsibilities. These roles may involve extra duties such as chairing committees, leading specific portfolios or departments, representing the local authority externally, or managing important functions within the council.

The amount of the Special Responsibility Allowance will vary depending on the position held and the level of responsibility associated with the role. These allowances are periodically reviewed by the Independent Remuneration Panel and takes into account factors such as the size and complexity of the authority, the time commitment required, and the level of decision-making authority involved.

Table 5 shows the existing posts in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance and the amount.

Table 5 - Post holders and amount of Special Responsibility Allowance.

Allowance	Current level
Leader of the Majority Party/Council	£14,421.00
Deputy Leader of the Majority Party	£4,021.00
Leader of the Opposition	£4,021.00
Deputy Leader of the Opposition	£1,549.00
<u>Cabinet Members/Portfolio Holders</u>	
Economy and Assets	£6,184.00

Sustainable Homes and Communities	£6,184.00
Tourism, Leisure, Sport and Culture	£6,184.00
Democracy, Transparency and Communications	£6,184.00
Coast, Country and Environment	£6,184.00
Strategic Planning	£6,184.00
Council and Corporate Co-ordination	£6,184.00
Climate Action and Emergency Response	£6,184.00
Finance	£6,184.00
Chair of the Council	£7,813.00
Vice Chair of the Council	£2,998.00
Chair of Audit and Governance Committee	£2,010.00
Chair Licensing and Enforcement Committee	£3,098.00
Vice Chair Licensing and Enforcement Committee	£836.00
Chair Planning Committee	£6,184.00
Vice Chair Planning Committee	£3,098.00
Chair Housing Review Board	£3,098.00
Chair Overview Committee	£2,010.00
Chair Scrutiny Committee	£3,098.00

Table 6 shows the impact on the Special Responsibility Allowance based on increases linked to the annual NJC, CPI and average benchmarking data.

Table 6 - Possible Increases to Special Responsibility Allowance based on the three different Indices

Allowance	Current level	NJC increase	CPI adjustment	Benchmark adjustment
Leader of the Majority Party/Council	£14,421.00	£17,673	£18,041	£14,570
Deputy Leader of the Majority Party	£4,021.00	£4,928	£5,030	£7,235
Leader of the Opposition	£4,021.00	£4,928	£5,030	£3,091
Deputy Leader of the Opposition	£1,549.00	£1,898	£1,938	£1,549
<u>Cabinet Members/Portfolio Holders</u>				
Economy and Assets	£6,184.00	£7,578	£7,736	£6,831
Sustainable Homes and Communities	£6,184.00	£7,578	£7,736	£6,831
Tourism, Leisure, Sport and Culture	£6,184.00	£7,578	£7,736	£6,831

Democracy, Transparency and Communications	£6,184.00	£7,578	£7,736	£6,831
Coast, Country and Environment	£6,184.00	£7,578	£7,736	£6,831
Strategic Planning	£6,184.00	£7,578	£7,736	£6,831
Council and Corporate Co-ordination	£6,184.00	£7,578	£7,736	£6,831
Climate Action and Emergency Response	£6,184.00	£7,578	£7,736	£6,831
Finance	£6,184.00	£7,578	£7,736	£6,831
Chair of the Council	£7,813.00	£9,575	£9,774	£4,282
Vice Chair of the Council	£2,998.00	£3,674	£3,750	£1,930
Chair of Audit and Governance Committee	£2,010.00	£2,463	£2,515	£3,282
Chair Licensing and Enforcement Committee	£3,098.00	£3,797	£3,876	£3,414
Vice Chair Licensing and Enforcement Committee	£836.00	£1,025	£1,046	n/a
Chair Planning Committee	£6,184.00	£7,578	£7,736	£5,591
Vice Chair Planning Committee	£3,098.00	£3,797	£3,876	n/a
Chair Housing Review Board	£3,098.00	£3,797	£2,876	£5,874
Chair Overview Committee	£2,010.00	£2,463	£2,515	£3,482
Chair Scrutiny Committee	£3,098.00	£3,797	£3,876	£4,765

Taken individually there are problems with reviewing the roles within EDDC that attract a Special Responsibility Allowance, against each single index.

National Joint Council Pay Awards

Whilst on the surface the NJC pay awards would appear to be a uniform increase for every post holder, some, but not all, Special Responsibility Allowances have been altered since they were last set in 2008 due to structural Council changes.

Consumer Price Index

The CPI index was distorted by a significant 2022 increase. The compounded level of increase since 2012 (25.1%) would place some post holders significantly above the benchmark average.

The index is a measure of an increase in inflation annually whereas the Special Responsibility Allowance is an allowance to remunerate a member for their duties and personal commitment, not linked to price inflation per se.

Benchmarking

Some posts are not replicated across benchmarked councils. Where there are similarly named portfolios/titles to the role performed by the individual post holders, our analysis suggests they are not necessarily the same across all benchmarked councils.

In five cases average benchmarking across all eleven councils would produce a reduction in the Special Responsibility Allowance, in five it would produce an increase of circa 50% or greater and in two there are insufficient comparable posts to make comparisons meaningful.

It should be noted that for the majority of benchmark councils, a 2023-2024 adjustment of allowances has not taken place at the time of this report.

We believe the appropriate index to use is the average benchmark for posts in benchmarked councils, subject to the NJC pay percentage acting as a cap for benchmark increases over 22.55%, and a floor where there is a potential reduction in allowance or where posts are not replicated.

Table 7 shows the increase for each post using this method.

Table 7 - increase in Special Responsibility Allowance using benchmark average with NJC to cap increase at 22.55% and prevent reduction or where no comparison can be made.

Allowances	Current level	Benchmark average	NJC	Revised level with rules applied	Equivalent percentage increase
% Increase		20.64%	22.55%		
Basic Allowance	£4,360	£5,260		£5,260	
<u>Special Responsibility Allowance</u>					
Leader of the Majority Party/Council	£14,421	£14,477	£17,673	£14,477	0.39%
Deputy Leader of Majority Party/Council	£4,021	£7,003	£4,928	£4,928	22.55%
Leader of the Opposition	£4,021	£3,007	£4,928	£4,928	22.55%
Deputy Leader of the Opposition	£1,549	£1,456	£1,898	£1,898	22.55%
<u>Cabinet Members/Portfolio Holders</u>					
Economy and Assets	£6,184	£6,910	£7,578	£6,910	11.74%
Sustainable Homes and Communities	£6,184	£6,910	£7,578	£6,910	11.74%
Tourism, Leisure, Sport and Culture	£6,184	£6,910	£7,578	£6,910	11.74%
Democracy, Transparency and Communications	£6,184	£6,910	£7,578	£6,910	11.74%
Coast, Country and Environment	£6,184	£6,910	£7,578	£6,910	11.74%
Strategic Planning	£6,184	£6,910	£7,578	£6,910	11.74%
Council and Corporate Co-ordination	£6,184	£6,910	£7,578	£6,910	11.74%
Climate Action and Emergency Response	£6,184	£6,910	£7,578	£6,910	11.74%
Finance	£6,184	£6,910	£7,578	£6,910	11.74%
Chair of the Council	£7,813	£4,253	£9,575	£9,575	22.55%
Vice Chair of the Council	£2,998	£1,831	£3,684	£3,684	22.55%
Chair of Audit and Governance Committee	£2,010	£3,550	£2,463	£2,463	22.55%

Chair Licensing and Enforcement Committee	£3,098	£3,423	£3,797	£3,423	10.49%
Vice Chair License & Enforcement Comm	£836	n/a	£1,025	£1,025	22.5%
Chair Planning Committee	£6,184	£5,589	£7,578	£7,578	22.5%
Vice Chair Planning Committee	£3,098	n/a	£3,797	£3,797	22.5%
Chair Housing Review Board	£3,098	£4,762	£3,797	£3,797	22.5%
Chair Overview Committee	£2,010	£3,482	£2,463	£2,463	22.5%
Chair Scrutiny Committee	£3,098	£4,609	£3,973	£3,973	22.5%
Total expenditure - including Basic Allowance	£375,511			£445,799	18.71%

Recommendation

- 3 We recommend an increase to the Special Responsibility Allowance based on the average benchmark for equivalent posts in councils we benchmarked, except;**

Where a post with a benchmarked increase is higher than the NJC index (5) it will be capped at the NJC increase.

Where a post with a benchmark percentage increase would be lower than currently graded or is not replicated within the benchmarked councils (7) it will receive the NJC increase.

- 4 We recommend that these increases to the Special Responsibility Allowance should be backdated to the 1st June 2023.**

Temporary Special Responsibility Allowance

There was virtually total agreement amongst the respondents to the questionnaire that Councillors covering special responsibilities of another Councillor, due for example, to a period of long-term absence for a significant period, should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance if they are not in receipt of one, or an uplift in their SRA if one is currently received.

Recommendation

- 5 We recommend that if a member, with the agreement of the Leader of the Council, is acting in a capacity of a cabinet or portfolio holder for a significant period due to the incumbent being absent through sickness or extended leave of absence, that individual should, if not in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance, be paid the full agreed amount of the incumbent Special Responsibility Allowance. If they are already in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance and continue to receive it, they should receive 50% of the Special Responsibility Allowance for that new post/responsibility.**

Annual uprating of allowances

Although recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel in 2009, and in line with the 2003 Regulations, there is currently no mechanism to annually increase the Basic Allowance or Special Responsibility Allowance. This has meant that over time payment levels have fallen significantly below the level that is required to keep pace with peers in other councils.

Many other councils recognise the importance of maintaining an appropriate level of remuneration year-on-year rather than allowing levels to fall behind and attempt to make good the shortfall periodically.

There are national indices that could be used to set the annual increase and the regulations allow 'a scheme of allowances [...] make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances to be ascertained by reference to an index as may be specified by the authority and contained in the scheme'. A number of councils that implement an annual increase to allowances link their decision to the National Joint Council Pay Award for Council staff. We believe this is the most appropriate benchmark for an annual allowance increase.

Recommendation

- 6 We recommend that the Basic Allowance should increase each year on the 1st May beginning in May 2024 and Special Responsibility Allowances should increase each year on 1st June beginning in 2024 in line with the average of the agreed National Joint Council Pay Award for staff. This index should be reviewed every 4 years.**

Travelling Rates and Subsistence Allowances

The rates of travel by a member's motor vehicle are based on the current HMRC approved mileage rates. These rates are the same for the staff of EDDC and are commonly used by other councils.

Subsistence allowances may be claimed to meet the costs of accommodation, meals and other refreshments in connection with approved duties.

Travel and subsistence rates payable to Members were last agreed by council on 28th July 2010 and are set out in the Members Allowance Scheme.

Any subsistence claim in connection with an approved duty, not involving an overnight absence from the normal place of residence is limited to:

- more than 4 hours, £6.76 for breakfast (£8.29 in London)
- more than 4 hours, £9.43 for lunch (£15.36 in London)
- more than 4 hours, ending after 7pm, £11.56 for an evening meal (£15.36 in London)

At meetings such as council or committee meetings, meals or refreshments may be provided by the council, including where absence from any residence may not exceed 4 hours. Where meals are provided or paid for separately by the council subsistence allowances shall not be paid.

We recognise that since subsistence allowance levels were last set in 2010 there has been an increase in costs of food and overnight accommodation. We feel (but recognise it is outside of our remit) that these levels should be reviewed for all EDDC staff.

We believe the HMRC agreed travel rates for Councillors should continue to be aligned to those of EDDC staff. If HMRC rates and allowances change for staff they should automatically be applied to Councillors.

Recommendation

- 7 We recommend that there are no changes to the current Travel Rates and Subsistence Allowances for Councillors at this time as they are aligned to EDDC staff allowances.**

Child Care and Dependants' Carers' Allowance

A Child Care and Dependants' Carers' Allowance scheme was introduced on 1st April 2003. The Child Care and Dependants' Carers' Allowance is set at the National Living Wage, with a maximum amount of 5 hours able to be claimed in any one day and only deals with 'expenses of arranging for

the care of [their] children or dependants [that] are necessarily incurred'. The level of allowance will be adjusted automatically in line with any adjustments made to the National Living Wage.

A carer is any responsible person who does not normally live with the member as part of that Members family.

Recommendation

- 8 We recommend that there are no changes to the current Child Care and Dependents' Carers' Allowances at this time.**

Co-optees Allowance

Members of the Housing Review Board (two independent and five tenant representatives) are entitled to expenses but not to a 'session allowance'. We are advised that the recruitment of Tenant Members has been difficult in recent years and we see no reason why those co-opted Members should not receive an allowance in-line with co-optees on other committees.

Co-optees on the Standards Committee and Independent Review Panel are currently entitled to claim £50 for up to a four-hour session, plus travel expenses.

No mention is made of home working or dial-up meetings, increasingly a common and cost-effective way of conducting council business during and post COVID.

Democratic Services have raised with us organisational difficulties with payments of allowances when a Co-optee works from home as there are currently no checks and balances to establish the hours worked or why they are worked. Even where there are on-line or in-person meetings that are recorded by, or registered with, Democratic Services there is a risk that meetings can be called or held that are not strictly necessary or could have been conducted in a different way to manage costs.

For these reasons the Home Office guidance suggest 'The Co-optees' allowance [will] in general be an annual allowance'. We agree and feel the time has come where due to changes in working arrangements, specifically working from home and the use of on-line meetings, we should move to an annual allowance for Co-optees.

We recommend that the Co-optee session allowance of £50 for up to a 4-hour session should be discontinued and that an annual allowance be introduced in line with Democratic Services views and Home Office guidance.

Of the three formal Co-optee groups only the Housing Review Board meets according to an agreed and regular timetable, normally meeting 5 times per year. The others meet on an 'as required' basis. All Co-optees meetings, in addition to the formal meetings, require research, pre-reading and preparation in advance of meetings.

Recommendation

- 9 We recommend that all Co-optees on the Housing Review Board should be in receipt of an annual allowance in addition to their travel expense.**
- 10 We recommend that an annual allowance be introduced in line with the views of Democratic Services and Home Office guidance from 1st May 2024. These allowances should be reviewed after 4 years.**

Housing Review Board	£550
Standards Committee	£400
Independent Remuneration Panel	£400

September 2023