

# Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel

## Scheme of members' allowances for BCP Council 2024

### 1. Introduction

This report has been prepared by the Independent Remuneration Panel (the **Panel**) for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP Council) comprising three individuals drawn from the community who have previously participated in panels across Dorset: -

- 1.1. Mr John Quinton (Chairman)
- 1.2. Mr Keith Broughton
- 1.3. Mr Martin Varley

### 2. Legal Basis

- 2.1. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the **Regulations**) apply to local authorities including district and county councils.
- 2.2. 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.
- 2.3. A relevant authority's scheme of allowances may also provide for the payment of special responsibility allowances (**SRA**s) 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.

- 2.4. SRAs need not be the same and may reflect the different expectations, time and effort involved in particular roles. The Panel take the view that this time commitment is in addition to those hours set out in paragraph 6.1.
- 2.5. Member allowance schemes may also provide for the payment of a carers' allowance and for members' travelling and subsistence whilst acting in connection with their duties as a member of the authority.
- 2.6. 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.

### **3. Role of the Panel**

- 3.1. As set out in paragraph 2, the scheme for the payment of a BA must be adopted by the BCP Council. It may also adopt a scheme for the payment of SRAs and other allowances, having first had "regard" to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel. Therefore, councillors themselves acting as a relevant authority make the final decision about what allowances are to be available.
- 3.2. Regulation 20(2) requires an independent remuneration panel shall consist of at least three members none of whom: -
  - (a) is also a member of an authority in respect of which it makes recommendations or is a member of a committee or sub-committee of such an authority; or
  - (b) is disqualified from being or becoming a member of an authority.
- 3.3. The three members of the Panel are individuals, none of whom are disqualified from being or becoming a member of a relevant authority.
- 3.4. The Panel met on 14, 15, 21 and 22 October and finally on 4 November 2024.

### **4. Context**

- 4.1. The Panel had conducted an interim review of the allowances scheme earlier that year. It had been clear to the Panel at that time that there were a number of areas that required further information to enable the Panel to form a judgement on the roles and accountabilities in question. The Council had therefore agreed to accept a number of interim recommendations from the Panel on the basis that a comprehensive review would take place later that year. This would include a review of the BA which had not been considered since 2019.
- 4.2. The Panel's recommendations made in the review of the allowances scheme in 2020, were not accepted. The Council decided:

- (i) not to increase the BA;
- (ii) to reduce the Leader's SRA; and
- (iii) not to apply indexation to the allowances in 2020 and 2021 and to recommence indexation only in 2022/23.

This decision has meant that all of the allowances within the scheme ceased to be adjusted unlike similar authorities within the south west region.

- 4.3. This comprehensive review began with a meeting with the Monitoring Officer of the Council followed by a meeting with the Leader of the Council.
- 4.4. The Leader who had recently been appointed, informed the Panel that she had appointed an additional member of the Cabinet to provide extra capacity so that there were now 10 cabinet members including herself. In addition, she had retained three Lead Members for specific roles which again added capacity to the work of the cabinet.

## **5. Evidence**

- 5.1. To inform the development of its recommendations, the Panel was provided with the following evidence: -
  - (i) the Regulations;
  - (ii) detailed benchmarking data from South West Councils and from other unitary authorities on the levels of current allowances;
  - (iii) the current members' allowance scheme for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council;
  - (iv) the Constitution and the various roles of committees and its members;
  - (v) statistics relating to the number and nature of meetings of committees.
- 5.2. The Panel also had the opportunity to interview those individuals named at paragraph 6.4 below and to consider the responses to the questionnaire referred to in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 below.

## **6. Methodology for the review**

- 6.1. A questionnaire was sent to all BCP Councillors seeking views on the average amount of time spent on council business and the various aspects of the allowances scheme. Of the 20 responses received, over half estimated that they spent less than 100 hours a month on council business and another third estimated that the time spent was between 100 and 120 hours per month. This was a slightly lower amount of time than the results from previous surveys although this may reflect the actual roles of those that had responded.
- 6.2. In addition, the questionnaire asked councillors whether the BA and SRAs had been set at the right level. There were various responses to this question and these are dealt with under the relevant sections of this report.

6.3. The Panel interviewed the following councillors:

- (i) Councillor Millie Earle, Leader of the Council;
- (ii) Councillor Phillip Broadhead, Leader of the Conservative Group;
- (iii) Councillor Mike Cox, Deputy Leader of the Council;
- (iv) Councillor Mark Howell, Lead Member, Regeneration;
- (v) Councillor David Flagg, Chairman Licensing Committee;
- (vi) Councillor Marion LePoldevin, Chairman Area Planning Committee West;
- (vii) Councillor Paul Hillard, Chairman Area Planning Committee East;
- (viii) Councillor Sandra Moore, Cabinet Member Communities and Partnerships
- (ix) Councillor Stephen Bartlett, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board;
- (x) Councillor Christopher Rigby, Chairman Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee;
- (xi) Councillor Sharon Carr Brown, Chairman Children Services Scrutiny Committee;
- (xii) Councillor Sandra Armstrong, Member of the Green Party;
- (xiii) Councillor Lisa Northover, Member of the Independent Group;
- (xiv) Councillor Vanessa Ricketts, Chairman of the Standards Committee.

6.4. In addition, the Panel interviewed Janie Berry – Monitoring Officer and Jill Holyoake, Team Leader, Governance and Regulatory.

6.5. The Panel wish to record its thanks to those individuals who gave evidence and for all of the support that it received from officers of the Council.

## **7. Panel Deliberations**

7.1. The Panel sought to interview councillors of all political groups with particular reference to the issues raised within the responses to the questionnaire. The Panel also interviewed officers with appropriate roles and responsibilities in an effort to gain the best possible interpretation of how the council was currently operating and functioning.

## **8. The Basic Allowance (BA)**

8.1. The Panel carefully considered the responses given by members to the questionnaire referred to in paragraph 6.1 of this report. Approximately two thirds of respondees (13/20) felt the BA was set at the right level. Of the

respondee (3/20) who suggested an increased level, this ranged from £16,000 to £22,000 per annum.

- 8.2. The Panel received evidence from the interviews that the BA was currently set at an appropriate level which echoed the results of the questionnaire. However, the Panel also heard evidence that a number of councillors had reduced their employed working hours or had revised their employed working arrangements to enable them to fulfil their roles within the Council.
- 8.3. The Panel noted the responses within the questionnaire regarding the average amount of time spent on council duties, as set out in paragraph 6.1 of this report.
- 8.4. The Panel considered benchmarking data compiled for South West Councils and this indicated that the current BA payable within BCP Council (£14,458) was at the lower end of the range when compared with a sample of local and unitary councils. When compared to the shire county/unitaries councils in the South West it was again slightly on the low side (Dorset £14,699, Cornwall £18,368, Devon £15,000, Somerset £15,500 and Wiltshire £15,860).
- 8.5. The Panel received the views of some councillors to the effect that a higher level of BA would attract people from a broader spectrum and demographic to stand for election.
- 8.6. The Panel recognised the evidence received both from the responses to the questionnaire and in interviews, but concluded that the benchmarking data indicated that the BA required some adjustment. In addition, the Panel were aware that apart from some indexation of allowances in 2022 and 2023, the BA had not been increased since the formation of the new council in 2019.
- 8.7. The Panel received evidence of the workloads and commitment of ordinary members of various committees and concluded that the challenges and the workload of a councillor within BCP Council were significant and justify a recommendation of an increase in the BA.
- 8.8. BCP Council is the tenth largest unitary in the country and has a significantly larger population than similar urban councils in the area. Accordingly, in addition to the workloads undertaken by councillors with the formal business of the Council, there are complex issues to be dealt with at ward level.
- 8.9. ***The Panel recommends that the basic allowance paid to members be increased to £16,000 per annum.***

## **9. Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)**

- 9.1. **Leader and Cabinet Members.** The Panel did not receive overwhelming evidence from the responses to the questionnaire regarding the SRAs for the Leader and Cabinet Members.

- 9.2. However benchmarking evidence considered by the Panel quite clearly indicated that the Leader's SRA (£31,320) is significantly lower than the SRAs awarded for the role in other similar councils in the region. The Leader of Dorset Council received £36,590, Cornwall Council £33,980, Devon County Council £37,700, Somerset Council £38,750, and Wiltshire Council £39,670.
- 9.3. This benchmarking data was shared with several interviewees and the consensus was that the Leader's SRA was too low. When BCP council was formed in 2019 the Panel had recommended a significant SRA for the Leader, to recognise the huge workload in leading a large and complex council, but this had not been agreed by the Council. The Panel remains of the view that this is a role that is comparable to, if not greater than, similar councils in the south west.
- 9.4. The Panel agreed that having considered both the evidence received, including the benchmarking data, and taking into account the complex nature and size of the Council, that the Leader's SRA required a significant increase.
- 9.5. ***The Panel recommends that the SRA paid to the Leader be increased to £40,000 per annum.***
- 9.6. In relation to Cabinet Members, the benchmarking data indicated that the BCP SRA (£20,880) is on the low side when compared with similar councils regionally. Currently Dorset Council Cabinet Members receive £23,000, Cornwall Council £23,780, Devon County Council £22,623, Somerset Council £20,150 and Wiltshire Council £23,800.
- 9.7. The Panel received evidence that the workloads for both the Leader and Cabinet Members were significant. As reported in paragraph 3.3 the Leader had appointed an additional Cabinet Member with the intention of easing workloads. However, the Panel received evidence that these were still full time jobs with little opportunity to have separate employment.
- 9.8. A number of similar local authorities in the south west pay a higher SRA to the Deputy Leader of the Council as compared to other members of the cabinet. The Panel did not receive evidence that the Deputy Leader had significant additional responsibilities to other cabinet members or that this was an issue within BCP Council. On this basis the Panel recommend that no additional SRA should be payable to the Deputy Leader.
- 9.9. For the same reasons set out in paragraph 9.4 above, the Panel recommends that the Cabinet Member's SRA should be increased.
- 9.10. ***The Panel recommends that the SRA payable to Cabinet Members be increased to £25,000 per annum.***

9.11. **Lead Members**

- 9.12. During the interim review referred to in paragraph 4.1 of this report, the Panel was informed that the SRA for the Lead Member role already existed within the Allowances Scheme. The Leader at that time was clear however, that this was a new and significantly different role to the previous one. The Leader was keen to establish some flexibility within the Scheme to enable her to appoint Lead Members to a variety of roles to add to the capacity of her Cabinet. These might be ongoing in nature whereas others might fulfil ad hoc roles that would cease to exist after a period of time. The Panel agreed that this would need to be considered as part of the future review of the scheme of Allowances and as part of this consideration a role description would be required.
- 9.13. During the interview with the new Leader of the Council, she informed the Panel that she had retained three Lead Members and would adopt a similar approach to that of the previous Leader where Lead Members were appointed to undertake project based work which could be ongoing but could also be time limited and on a part time basis.
- 9.14. The Panel received conflicting evidence from the interviews concerning the role of Lead Members and their visibility within the Council. In the absence of a formal role description the Panel found it difficult to assess the role and its importance to the operation of the Council. The Panel was informed by the Monitoring Officer that it was intended to include a role profile within the Constitution when it had been agreed with the Leader.
- 9.15. The Panel recommends that the SRA for this role should be considered further when the scope and parameters of the role have been formalised. As there had been no overwhelming evidence, the SRA should remain at the same level, albeit with a small adjustment to recognise the non-indexation of allowances as referred to in paragraph 4.2.
- 9.16. In order to address the Leader's request for some flexibility in the SRA payable to Lead Members to recognise their various roles and workloads and permanent and fixed term roles, the Panel recommends that the SRA payable is flexible up to the upper limit.
- 9.17. ***The Panel recommends that the SRA payable to Lead Members be increased to £12,200 per annum with the Leader being authorised to vary this SRA up to the maximum, to recognise various roles and workloads and permanent and fixed term appointments.***
- 9.18. **Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council.** The Chairman of the Council has an important role in managing and presiding over regular Council meetings to ensure that Councillors who are not in the Cabinet or who do not hold the chair of a main Committee, are able to hold those office holders to account and to represent the views of their constituents

- 9.19. In addition, the Chairman has an important civic and ceremonial role to perform to raise and maintain the profile of the Council and its communities. The Panel was informed that over the previous year, the Chairman had attended 90 civic events. This aspect of the role sets it apart from other Committee Chairmen.
- 9.20. Whilst the Panel is not in favour of paying SRAs to vice-chairmen in general, the Panel had previously recommended that the Vice-Chairman of the Council is an exception, as, in addition to deputising for the Chairman at meetings of the Council, he/she will also fulfil an important civic/ceremonial role.
- 9.21. The Panel was informed that the Vice-Chairman had attended 11 civic events in the previous year which was a reduction when compared to the data provided under the last comprehensive review in 2020. This in the Panel's view was sufficient to justify the continuation of the award of an SRA to the Vice-Chairman albeit at a reduced level.
- 9.22. No evidence had been presented to the Panel to suggest any significant change in the Chair's SRA was required. However as with all SRAs, the Panel agreed to recommend a small uplift in the SRA to counter the two years where no indexation had been applied, as explained in paragraph 4.2 of this report.
- 9.23. ***The Panel recommends that the SRA for the Chair of Council be increased to £12,200 per annum and that the SRA for the Vice-Chairman be reduced to £3,600 per annum.***
- 9.24. **Chairmen of Committees.** The Panel received representations concerning the levels at which the current SRAs had been set.
- 9.25. The Panel had previously accepted that there would be gradations of responsibility for committees with some meeting more often and having greater importance to the overall governance of the Council. This model of tiers of SRAs is common in most councils.
- 9.26. There were currently within the Allowances Scheme three levels of SRAs for chairmen of committees. The upper level SRA was payable to the Chairs of Council, Audit and Governance and Licensing Committees. The middle level SRA was payable to the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the two Chairs of the Area Planning Committees. The lower level SRA was payable to the Chairs of the Standards Committee and the Appeals Committee.
- 9.27. The Panel was informed that the Audit and Governance Committee was a key component in the Council's corporate governance and the reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards. This, in the Panel's view, was sufficient to retain the SRA's position at the highest level, with a small adjustment to reflect the non-indexation of allowances referred to at paragraph 4.2.



- 9.28. ***The Panel recommends that the SRA for the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee be increased to £12,200 per annum.***
- 9.29. The SRA for the Chair of the Licensing Committee was also placed in the higher level of SRAs. The benchmarking data received from South West Councils highlighted that the BCP SRA of £11,566 is significantly higher than the SRA for the role in other similar authorities in the region. Currently the Dorset Council SRA was £5,227, Cornwall Council £5,097, Somerset Council £7,750 and Wiltshire Council £3,967. In addition, evidence received from both the questionnaire and from the interviews suggested that the level of the SRA was anomalous.
- 9.30. The Panel concluded that this anomaly, together with the payment of an SRA to the Vice-Chairman, was historic. Prior to December 2023 the Licensing Committee required that all sub committees were chaired by the Chair or Vice-Chair (or in their absence an experienced committee member). In the period of time from May 2023 to December 2023, there were 14 sub committee meetings, with the Chair of the Committee chairing 8, the Vice Chair 3, with 3 others being chaired by experienced members. In December 2023 the Licensing Committee agreed to extend the opportunity to chair sub committees to all committee members interested in doing so, to broaden their experience and provide more resilience. Since this date there have been 16 sub committee meetings with the Chair of the committee chairing 5 meetings, the Vice Chair 4 meetings with 7 other meetings being chaired by other members of the committee.
- 9.31. In the opinion of the Panel this reduces both the workload and the responsibility of the Chairman of the Licensing Committee to such an extent that the SRA should be reduced to the equivalent of the middle tier SRAs.
- 9.32. ***The Panel recommends that the SRA payable to the Chair of the Licensing Committee should be reduced to £9,000 per annum.***
- 9.33. During the interim review referred to in paragraph 4.1 of this report, the Panel were informed that a revised Overview and Scrutiny model would be introduced with an over-arching Overview and Scrutiny Board. The Board would be responsible for overseeing the overall scrutiny function including oversight of work plans and use of resources. It is also responsible for considering all executive decisions that are called in. In addition, there would be three Overview and Scrutiny Committees; the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Environment and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These committees would be responsible for the scrutiny function within their individual service areas as well as undertaking policy reviews.

- 9.34. At the time of the interim review there was no overall consensus about whether this would be a flat or hierarchical structure. Under the current review, the Panel again received differing evidence about the scrutiny roles and responsibilities. However, the most powerful evidence came from the individual chairs of the scrutiny bodies. In their opinions the roles were different but quite equal and the structure was considered to be a flat structure without any specific reporting requirements between the Committees and the Board.
- 9.35. On this basis the Panel recommends that all the SRAs for the chairs of the Board and the Committees, should remain equal. There is no evidence to suggest that the SRA should move to the upper level, the SRA should remain in the middle tier, with a small adjustment to reflect the non-indexation of allowances as referred to in paragraph 4.2.
- 9.36. ***The Panel recommends that the SRAs payable to the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Environment and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee be increased to £9,000 per annum.***
- 9.37. As part of the interim review referred to in paragraph 4.1 of this report, the Panel was informed that an area-based planning function would be introduced with two area planning committees replacing a council wide system. Both chairs were interviewed by the Panel under the current review, who estimated that the overall workload had decreased by approximately 40% following the introduction of the area-based system. Statistics provided to the Panel indicated that the combined workload of the two area committees equated approximately to the workload of the previous council wide committee with the workloads of both area committees being very similar. On this basis the Panel recommends that both SRAs should be equal. There is no evidence to suggest that the SRA should move to the upper level. The Panel recommends that the SRA should remain in the middle tier, with a small adjustment to reflect the non-indexation of allowances as referred to in paragraph 4.2.
- 9.38. ***The Panel recommends that the SRA payable to the Chairs of the Eastern and Western Area Planning Committees be increased to £9,000 per annum.***
- 9.39. The Panel received one response to the questionnaire which questioned the relatively low level of the SRA for the Chair of the Appeals Committee when compared to the Chair of the Licensing Committee. This not an area which the Panel had previously investigated. However, on receiving evidence from the officers of the Council it was clear that this involved a significant workload. In the previous municipal year, the committee met 16 times with the Chair chairing the vast majority of meetings.

- 9.40. ***The Panel recommends that the SRA payable to the Chair of the Appeals Committee be increased to £9,000 per annum.***
- 9.41. The Panel interviewed the current Chair of the Standards Committee to better understand the workloads and process involved in determining complaints made against BCP councillors. The Panel received evidence from the Annual Report on Code of Conduct Complaints to the Standards Committee on 8 October 2024. This contained comparable data over a 4 year period which showed that complaints considered by the Committee rose from 21 in 20/21, to 35 in 21/22, and to 62 in 22/23. The figure for 23/24 was 13 but this represented the period from the elections in May 2023 so it was for a part year and reflected that there was a large cohort of new councillors elected at those elections. Indeed, the Panel was informed that an independent report entitled “External Assurance Review of BCP Council” from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities dated August 2023, highlighted that there had been a number of complaints about the way that Councillors had used social media and a high number of complaints made to the Standards Committee.
- 9.42. The Panel agreed that this significant workload should be recognised with a more comparable SRA and that this should be a middle tier SRA.
- 9.43. ***The Panel recommends that the SRA payable to the Chairman of the Standards Committee be increased to £9,000 per annum.***
- 9.44. **Vice-Chairmen of Committees.** The Panel did receive a number of responses to the questionnaire that questioned why the scheme did not provide for the payment of an SRA to vice-chairs of committees.
- 9.45. The Panel is of the view that simply deputising for the Chairman in his/her absence, was not a significant additional responsibility and therefore did not justify the payment of an SRA.
- 9.46. The Panel was informed by some councillors that Vice-Chairmen were undertaking the same level of work as the Chairmen by attending briefings and on numerous occasions deputised by chairing meetings. Councillors also raised the issue of a Vice-Chairman deputising for the Chairman during a period of illness.
- 9.47. The Panel received evidence from officers that out of a total of 64 meetings of committees, there were only 3 occasions when a Vice-Chairman, in the absence of the Chairman, had chaired the meeting.
- 9.48. In terms of whether the workloads of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen were comparable, the Panel again felt that this was unproven. Undoubtedly Vice-Chairmen attended briefings and prepared for the meeting as this was good practice should they have to deputise for the Chairman at the meeting, but as pointed out in the previous paragraph, this happened very infrequently. The Panel is of the view that some of the roles that were currently performed by

Vice-Chairmen reflected the way individual councillors wished to operate but this was not a role with defined significant additional responsibility.

- 9.49. The Panel recognises there maybe occasions where the Vice-Chairman would be required to deputise for the Chairman on a long-term basis, because of ill health or other circumstances. These circumstances are already provided for within the Scheme of allowances and therefore additional provision is not required.
- 9.50. The Panel has already accepted one exception to the generic rule that SRAs are not payable to Vice-Chairmen: this is for the Vice-Chairman of Council as explained in paragraphs 9.20 and 9.21 above. In addition, the Panel received conflicting evidence as to whether the Vice-Chairman of Licensing should receive an SRA. For the reasons outlined in paragraph 9.30 above, the Panel agreed that the SRA for the Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee can no longer be justified.
- 9.51. ***The Panel recommends that apart from the SRA payable to the Vice Chair of Council, no SRA be paid to the Vice Chairs of Committees including the Vice Chair of Licensing Committee whose SRA should be removed from the Scheme.***
- 9.52. **Group Leaders.** Currently an SRA is payable to all Group Leaders with a membership of no fewer than five.
- 9.53. The purpose of the Group Leaders' SRA is to reflect the importance of political groups to the political management of the council. It reflects the need for Group Leaders to communicate with their members on Council business and through this, enables the Council's officers to have a forum of Group Leaders, who can represent their Group's views on issues such as member/officer relations, code of conduct issues, training and development and the management of forthcoming meetings of Council.
- 9.54. The Panel received no evidence to suggest that this SRA required change. However, the Panel did consider whether it would be appropriate to introduce an enhanced SRA for the Leader of the main opposition group to recognise the additional work required in holding the majority group to account. During discussions with the Panel this did not receive any major support. There is no provision within the Constitution to differentiate this role from other group leaders. On this basis the Panel recommends that existing Group Leader's SRA should remain at the current level, albeit adjusted to reflect the non-application of indexation of allowances as referred to in paragraph 4.2.
- 9.55. ***The Panel recommends that the SRA payable to Group Leaders whose groups contain 5 members or more, be increased to £3,600 per annum.***
- 9.56. **Number of SRAs Payable.** The Panel received no evidence to suggest that the current limit on the number of SRAs that can be claimed, required review. On that basis the Panel agreed that the current limitation should remain but

that it should not apply to a Group Leader's SRA and that should be permitted to be paid as a second SRA.

- 9.57. **Indexation of Allowances.** The Panel received some response both during the interviews and from the questionnaire that supported the updating of allowances on an annual basis. Most local authorities do this to reflect increases in the cost of living and it is quite often linked to the pay award to officers within the relative council. This historically has been the case within BCP Council although as pointed out in paragraph 4.2 of this report, this was deferred for two years in 2020 and 2021. The Panel remains of the view that this is the best way to keep the allowances up to date and in line with the cost of living. The Panel therefore recommends that with effect from 2025 the BA and the SRAs be increased in line with the Employees' National Salary Award, if such pay award is expressed as a fixed amount, the average pay award for BCP employees shall be applied for this purpose.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

(For ease of reference all of the recommendations of the Panel in relation to the allowances are reproduced here)

- 9.58. ***The Panel recommends that the basic allowance paid to members be increased to £16,000 per annum.***
- 9.59. ***The Panel recommends that the following special responsibility allowances be paid in recognition of the additional workload and levels of responsibility and accountability placed upon members appointed to these roles:***

***Leader - £40,000;***

***Cabinet Members (including Deputy Leader) - £25,000;***

***Chairman of the Council - £12,200;***

***Lead Members - £12,200***

***Vice-Chairman of the Council - £3,600;***

***Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee - £12,200;***

***Chairmen of Area Planning Committees - £9,000;***

***Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board - £9,000;***

***Chairman of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committees - £9,000;***

***Chairman of the Environment and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee - £9,000***

***Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees - £9,000;***

***Chairman of Licensing Committee - £9,000;***

***Chairman of Appeals Committee - £9,000;***

***Chairman of Standards Committee - £9,000;***

***Group Leaders - £3,600;***

***(Note: Groups must have a membership of no fewer than 5 for their Leader to receive an SRA)***

9.60. ***The Panel further recommends that:***

- (a) no SRAs be paid to vice-chairmen of committees (with the exception of the vice-chairman of Council); and***
- (b) members may not receive more than one SRA (and may elect which SRA to receive) with the exception that a Group Leader's SRA can be payable as a second SRA; and***
- (c) with effect from 2025 the BA and the SRAs be increased in line with the Employees' National Salary Award, if such pay award is expressed as a fixed amount, the average pay award for BCP employees shall be applied for this purpose; and***
- (d) the proposed increases in BA and SRAs be effective from the date of the resolution to adopt the revised scheme.***

## **10. Pensions**

10.1 The Panel received some representation concerning the lack of provision within the Scheme for pensions for members. Currently the Scheme simply states that there is no provision of any pension for Members within the allowances scheme. The Panel is of the view that the scheme should clarify this by stating that the Regulations do not permit the payment of pensions to members.

## **11. Travel allowances**

- 11.1. The Panel note that the current allowances scheme reflects the scheme for officers' travel and provides approved amounts under the HMRC approved Mileage Allowance Payments (MAPs). Anything payable above MAP approved amounts result in a taxable benefit to the claimant. The Panel further note that to introduce taxable benefits into the travel allowances scheme would be a disproportionate bureaucratic burden on the authority.
- 11.2. ***The Panel recommends the travel allowances continue to be paid to members and that these should reflect those allowances paid to officers and should include travelling to the BCP Councils offices for meetings and official business.***

## **12. Subsistence allowances**

- 12.1. Subsistence allowances include the costs of:
- (a) accommodation (if a member needs to stay overnight); and
  - (b) meals and other 'subsistence' while travelling.
- 12.2. The Panel has not received any representations concerning the payment of subsistence and therefore intends to recommend that the rates remain continue to be paid at the rates payable to officers of the council.
- 12.3. ***The Panel recommends that subsistence allowances be paid to members in the case of an absence not involving an absence overnight from the usual place of residence, and that these reflect those payable to officers of the council.***

## **13. Carers' allowance**

- 13.1. The Panel did receive evidence that this allowance was important to certain members.
- 13.2. ***The Panel recommends that a carers' allowance be paid to recompense the actual cost expended (and is not payable to a member of the claimant's own household subject to the Monitoring Officer having the discretion to approve claims on a case-by-case basis):***
- (a) ***for care of dependants, whether children, elderly people, or people with disabilities;***
  - (b) ***for such time as a member is on BCP Council business where travelling allowances are payable;***
  - (c) ***at an hourly rate equivalent to 110% of the minimum wage, rounded up to the nearest whole pound.***

**14. Co-opted and Independent Members' allowance**

**14.1. *The Panel recommends that this allowance be increased to £1,200 per annum to reflect the non-indexation of allowances as referred to in paragraph 4.2 of this report, and that it continue to be paid to:***

- (a) *the co-opted members of the scrutiny committee with oversight of education matters;***
- (b) *the independent persons appointed to contribute to the arrangements of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct; and***

**15. Foregoing and suspension of allowances**

**15.1. *The Panel recommends that members may, if they wish, forego all or any part of their entitlement to BA or any SRA by giving notice in writing to the Monitoring Office of the BCP Council.***

**15.2. *The Panel recommends that where a member is suspended or partially suspended from his/her duties as a councillor in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000, or regulations made under that Part:***

- (a) *the part of the basic allowance payable to him/her in respect of the period for which he/she is suspended or partially suspended shall be withheld;***
- (b) *the part of the SRA payable to him/her in respect of the period for which he/she is suspended or partially suspended shall be withheld; and***
- (c) *the part of the travelling and subsistence allowance payable to him/her in respect of the period for which he/she is suspended or partially suspended shall be withheld.***

**15.3. *The Panel recommends that where payment of any allowance has already been made in respect of any period during which the member concerned is:***

- (a) *Suspended or partially suspended from his responsibilities or duties as a councillor in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 or regulations made under that Part;***
- (b) *ceases to be a member of BCP Council; or***
- (c) *in any other way not entitled to receive the allowance in respect of a relevant period,***

***the authority may require that such part of the allowance as relates to any such period be repaid to the authority.***