

**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL  
IN RESPECT OF ALLOWANCES PAID TO  
MEMBERS OF CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
2024-25**

**THE PANEL**

The Panel, which is appointed to make recommendations to the Council in respect of the allowances paid to Councillors, comprises the following members:

Patrick Cleere  
Sumeet Dhul  
Elliot Harris

**REMIT**

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require, amongst other things, that the Council should have regard to the recommendations of an Independent Panel in agreeing allowances paid to Councillors.

Those Regulations require the Panel to produce a report making recommendations as to:

- The amount of basic allowance;
- Whether special responsibility allowances should be paid, and if so, the duties to which they should apply and the amounts of those allowances;
- Whether an allowance relating to the expense of arranging for the care of children or dependents should be available (carers' allowance) and, if so, the amount of that allowance;
- Whether travelling and subsistence allowances should be paid, and, if so, the duties for which they should be payable and the amounts of those allowances;
- Whether a basic allowance should be paid to co-opted members, and, if so, the amount of that allowance.

## **REPORT**

This is the Independent Panel's report of its review of Members' Allowances for 2024/25. This report has been compiled and agreed by members of the Panel following meetings and consideration of the relevant issues between October 2023 and December 2023. The Head of Governance & HR and the Democratic Services Manager supported the Panel in consideration of these matters.

### **Consultation with Councillors**

At the request of the Panel the Head of Governance & HR contacted all councillors by email asking if there were any issues they wished the Panel to consider. Councillors were also supplied with some benchmarking information comparing Charnwood's allowances with other nearby district councils, and with some district councils nationally which have similar population sizes to Charnwood.

One councillor responded requesting that the Panel re-consider allowing mileage expenses to be claimed for attending council and committee meetings.

One councillor responded suggesting that the allowance payable to the Mayor should be reviewed due to what they felt was the decreasing workload associated with the Mayor's role.

Four councillors responded raising concerns about the benchmarking information which suggested that Charnwood's allowances were significantly behind those paid by other councils, and suggesting that increases were therefore necessary in some areas.

### **Benchmarking of Member Allowances with Nearby Authorities**

At the request of the Panel the Head of Governance & HR undertook some benchmarking with Members Allowances Schemes of nearby authorities, and authorities nationally with similar population sizes to Charnwood.

This benchmarking suggested that Charnwood's allowances were significantly behind the averages paid by other councils in many aspects (see Appendix B for a summary).

### **Subsistence Allowances**

The Panel noted that the level of subsistence allowances has not been increased for a number of years and consequently has fallen behind the actual costs of meals and refreshments, particularly given ongoing inflationary pressures.

## Conclusions of the Panel

The Panel gave careful consideration to the following factors:

- the consultation responses from councillors
- the results of the benchmarking of Members Allowances
- the financial and budgetary challenges facing the Council.

Having weighed up all those factors, the Panel concluded that it was necessary to review and adjust all allowances, rather than just increasing them by an overall percentage or extending the link to officer pay awards.

In reviewing the allowances, the Panel were mindful of the financial challenges facing the Council but were of the view that the results of the benchmarking indicated that Charnwood's allowances were generally significantly below those paid both by other council's nearby and by other council's nationally with similar population sizes to Charnwood.

The Panel were advised that a 5% budgetary increase of Members Allowances had provisionally been included in the developing budget for 2024/25 (based on an assumption that increases in the allowances would continue to be linked to officer pay awards).

They also noted that an increase in the basic allowance for 2023/24 is still pending because the relevant officer pay award that basic allowances are currently linked to has not yet been finalised.

The Panel considered each allowance on the basis of these factors. The revised recommended basic allowances and special responsibility allowances are set out in the proposed Scheme in Annex B, with the major proposed changes being:

Leader Allowance: increase from £13,654 to £16,250.

Cabinet Member Allowance: increase from £5,462 to £6,750.

Plans Committee Chair: increase from £4,095 to £6,000.

Leader of the Opposition: increase from £4,578 to £6,000.

Scrutiny Commission Chair: increase from £4,095 to £6,000.

The Panel also recommends that the basic allowance for all councillors should increase from £5,610 to £6,000.

The total budgetary impact of the Panel’s recommendations in respect of basic and special responsibility allowances would be an increase of just under 10% in the total cost of such allowances.

However, as noted above there is already a provisional 5% increase proposed for next year’s allowances budget, and so the net overall financial impact would be just under a further 5% (or around £19.4k).

The Panel is not recommending that allowances should be linked to officer pay awards for 2024/25, and so there will be no further increases in allowances during the next financial year. The Panel will consider a link to officer pay awards again for 2025/26.

The Panel considered the request from one councillor that mileage claims should be re-introduced in respect of attending council and committee meetings, but decided not to support this.

The Panel also concluded that subsistence allowances rates should be increased to match those of Leicestershire County Council and to reflect rises in food and refreshment costs (noting that receipts must still be provided to support any relevant expenditure). The recommended new rates are therefore as follow:

	Current Maximum £	Proposed Maximum £
Breakfast	4.00	8.20
Lunch / Tea	5.00	11.30
Dinner / Evening Meal	8.00	19.50

### **THE COUNCIL’S SCHEME OF MEMBERS’ ALLOWANCES FOR 2022/23**

The Panel has reviewed the Council’s Scheme of Members’ Allowances and have incorporated the recommendations contained within this report.

A copy is attached to this report for approval at Annex C.

**APPENDIX B**

**BENCHMARKING INFORMATION - SUMMARY**

	Charnwood £	Nearby Councils Average £	Similar Population Size Councils Average £
Basic Allowance	5,610	5,589	6,491
Leader	13,654	16,129	20,962
Deputy Leader	9,556	8,961	13,727
Cabinet Member	5,462	6,965	11,342
Mayor / Chair	7,646	4,970	8,522
Deputy Mayor / Chair	1,911	1,462	2,435
Audit / Regulatory Chair	3,824	3,561	4,040
Plans Chair	4,095	5,905	7,641
Plans Vice-chair	1,639	1,664	2,522
Opposition Leader	4,578	4,829	7,642
Member Conduct / Standards Chair	1,639	1,916	3,140
Licensing Chair	2,730	3,246	5,558
Licensing Vice-chair (* Charnwood has two)	820*	-	1,428
Scrutiny Commission Chair	4,095	6,569	6,453
Scrutiny Commission Vice-chair	1,639	2,728	2,045
Scrutiny Committee Chair (Other)	3,824	4,045	4,968
Scrutiny Committee Vice-chair (Other)	1,530	1,652	2,209

**CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, Charnwood Borough Council has agreed the following scheme for members' allowances. In the scheme the term year means the financial year commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

**1. BASIC ALLOWANCE**

Subject to paragraph 8, for each year a basic allowance as specified in schedule 1 to this scheme shall be payable to each councillor.

**2. SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCE**

(1) Subject to paragraph 8, for each year a special responsibility allowance shall be payable to those councillors and co-opted members who have the special responsibilities that are specified in schedule 2 to this scheme. For those councillors who have more than one special responsibility allowance, the highest will be paid at 100% and the second or subsequent allowances will be paid at 50%.

(2) Where a majority of councillors belong to the same political group (the controlling group), a special responsibility allowance shall be paid to at least one person who is not a member of the controlling group and has special responsibilities specified in schedule 2 to this scheme.

**3. BASIC ALLOWANCE – CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

Subject to paragraph 8, for each year, a basic allowance as specified in schedule 1 to this scheme shall be payable to co-opted members and Parish Members of the Member Conduct Committee.

**4. CARERS' ALLOWANCE**

Expenditure incurred by councillors in providing childcare or in providing care for an elderly, sick or disabled dependent relative to facilitate their attendance at duties specified in the Regulations and approved by the Council shall be reimbursed in accordance with schedule 3 to this scheme.

**5. TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES**

Expenditure incurred by councillors in respect of travel and subsistence to facilitate their attendance at duties specified in the Regulations and approved by the Council shall be payable in accordance with schedule 4 to this scheme.

The travel and subsistence allowances set out in this scheme are available to the Co-opted and Parish Members of Council committees described in paragraph 3.

**6. APPROVED DUTIES**

Duties specified in the Regulations, together with specific duties approved by the Charnwood Borough Council in respect of which travel, subsistence and carers' allowances are payable are listed in schedule 5 to this scheme.

**7. RENUNCIATION**

A councillor may by notice in writing given to the Head of Finance elect to forego any part of his or her entitlement to an allowance under this scheme.

**8. PART-YEAR ENTITLEMENTS AND CEASING OF PAYMENTS**

Councillors who are elected, or cease to be elected, part way through the Municipal Year shall receive their basic allowance pro-rata. The same provisions exist for those councillors who are appointed to a position attracting a Special Responsibility Allowance or who cease to hold a position attracting a Special Responsibility Allowance.

**9. PENSIONS**

Members of the Council are not entitled to be eligible for membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

**10. CLAIMS AND PAYMENTS**

(1) Payment of basic and special responsibility allowances shall be made in monthly instalments of one-twelfth of the amounts specified in this scheme.

- (2) Claims for carers' allowance shall be in accordance with the conditions as specified in Schedule 3 to this scheme.
- (3) Claims for travel and subsistence allowances shall be in accordance with the conditions as specified in Schedule 4 to this scheme.

## **11. IT FOR COUNCILLORS**

In addition to the allowances specified in the Local Authorities (Members Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003, Charnwood Borough Council has authorised the IT support to councillors set out in Schedule 6.



## **SCHEDULES**

All amounts in the following schedules are paid from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

### **SCHEDULE 1**

#### **BASIC ALLOWANCES**

	Allowance
Councillor	£6,000
Parish Member of the Member Conduct Committee	£300

### **SCHEDULE 2**

#### **SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES**

	Allowance
Leader	£16,250
Deputy Leader	£9,750
Cabinet Lead Members	£6,750
Mayor	£7,500
Deputy Mayor	£2,000
Independent Chair of Audit Committee	£4,000
Chair of Plans Committee	£6,000
Vice-chair of Plans Committee	£2,000
Leader of the Opposition	£6,000
Chair of the Member Conduct Committee	£2,000
Chair of Licensing Committee	£3,500
Vice-chairs of Licensing Committee (2)	£1,000
Chair of Scrutiny Commission	£6,000
Vice-chair of Scrutiny Commission	£2,000
Chair of Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee	£4,000
Vice-chair of Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee	£1,750

### **SCHEDULE 3**

#### **CARERS' ALLOWANCE**

A Carers' Allowance shall be payable for duties specified in the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and approved by the Council subject to the following conditions:

- (i) The maximum hourly rate reimbursed for independent care of a child under the age of 14 shall be equal to the minimum wage.
- (ii) The maximum hourly rate reimbursed for the professional care of a dependent relative shall be equal to the Leicestershire County Council's hourly rate for a Home Care Assistant.
- (iii) Councillors must certify that the costs have been actually and necessarily incurred and the allowance shall be paid as a reimbursement of incurred expenditure against receipts.
- (iv) The allowance shall not be payable to a member of the claimant's own household.
- (v) The Head of Democracy shall be able to exercise discretion in respect of the above conditions in exceptional and justified circumstances.
- (vi) Claims shall be made within four months of the duty to which it relates.

### **SCHEDULE 4**

#### **TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES**

Travel and Subsistence Allowance shall be payable in respect of duties specified in the Regulations and approved by the Council (see Schedule 5). Claims shall be made within four months of the approved duties to which they relate.

In respect of travel the following may be claimed:

- (a) The actual cost of travel by public service must not exceed the ordinary or any available cheap fare. Standard class rail fare may be claimed. In the case of travel by ship, first class fare is applicable.
- (b) Deposit or portorage of luggage and sleeping car accommodation subject to reduction by one-third of the subsistence allowance for that night.
- (c) Taxi-cab fares in cases of urgency or where no public service is

reasonably available. The amount claimed shall not exceed the actual fare and any reasonable gratuity.

- (d) The cost of hiring a car which must not exceed the rate applicable to the members' own car.
- (e) Where a councillor uses his or her own motor car or motor cycle, the mileage rate claimed shall be as the rates available to staff (casual users) and agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (JNC) on an annual basis.

Current rates per mile are:

	Up to 10,000 miles	Over 10,000 miles
Car	45p per mile	25p per mile
Motorcycle	24p per mile	24 per mile
Bicycle	20p per mile	20p per mile

For journeys out of the county, councillors are encouraged to use rail travel. However, if they use their car, the cost claimed shall be the mileage rate above or the cost of standard return rail fare, whichever is the lower.

- (f) Where a councillor carries an official passenger, the additional mileage allowance of 5p per mile per passenger set by HMRC applies.

In respect of subsistence:

The Council will refund actual amounts spent in respect of subsistence where supported by receipts and provided that the amounts are reasonable. The following rates are considered to be the maximum reasonable limits:

In the case of absence not at the normal place of residence:

- (i) for more than four hours before 11am – Breakfast allowance up to £8.20
- (ii) for more than five hours after this time, ending before 8.30pm – Lunch/Tea allowance up to £11.30
- (iii) for more than five hours ending after 8.30pm – Dinner allowance up to £19.50

Use will not be made of a “flat rate” in respect of overnight absence as all expenditure in that respect should be claimed based on actual expenditure only, supported by receipts. However, a flat rate (without the need for receipts) of up to £5 for incidental expenses resulting from overnight absence is claimable. Where possible, overnight accommodation should be booked by the Council so that the VAT element can be reclaimed.

Subsistence allowances may not be claimed where adequate refreshments are provided (eg. lunch during training courses), or if any of the relevant meals are included within the cost of accommodation (eg. breakfast provided as part of hotel costs).

## **SCHEDULE 5**

### **APPROVED DUTIES OF THE COUNCIL**

The Council has agreed that an approved duty, for the purpose of the payment of travel (except those marked with an asterix \* for which travel expenses cannot be claimed), subsistence and carers' allowances, is attendance at meetings of the following, where the councillor attending is a member of the relevant body or is acting as a substitute for such, or has been requested to attend to assist with the business being considered by the body:

- Council\*
- Cabinet\*
- Scrutiny Bodies\*
- Plans Committee\* and its site inspections
- Licensing Committee\* and its Sub-committees\*
- Member Conduct Committee\* and its Panels\*
- Audit Committee\*
- Personnel Committee\* and its Panels\*
- Appeals and Reviews Committee\* and its Panels\*
- Joint Consultative Committee\*
- Housing Management Advisory Board\*

*\* Travel expenses cannot be claimed for attending these meetings*

Meetings of all outside bodies to which the Council makes appointments and upon which the councillor serves as a representative of the Council or substitute representative.

Conferences authorised by committees or in accordance with the scheme of delegation.

Interviews for the appointment of staff.

The opening of tenders in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Constitution.

Attendance by Cabinet Members at meetings within the Borough that

relate directly to their lead member role.

Attendance by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor at meetings and events, both inside and outside the Borough, that relate directly to their roles.

Such other meetings at which individual members have been appointed to represent the Borough Council other than as members of outside bodies, either by virtue of a specific resolution or in the capacity of Leader or Deputy Leader or as Chair or Vice-chair of a Committee.

Training sessions, briefings and other meetings certified by the Head of Democracy.

Further to the above, the Council has agreed the following:

- (i) That travel allowance and carers' allowance, but not subsistence allowance be payable to a borough councillor in respect of attendance by invitation at a Parish Council or Parish Meeting to participate in the discussion of a Borough Council function.
- (ii) That travel and subsistence allowance and carers' allowance be payable to a borough councillor in respect of attendance at Borough Council premises or other establishments within the Borough on such occasions as they consider necessary in connection with the discharge of the Council's functions up to a limit of 15 occasions in each Council year. These are known as "duty days". This provision is an authorisation to carry out an approved duty of a councillor's own choice on 15 occasions of whatever duration and not 15 duty days which might be interpreted, for example, as 30 half days. Visits to the Council offices for IT support purposes should be classed as duty days if travel and subsistence or carers' allowances are to be claimed.
- (iii) That travel and subsistence allowance and carers' allowance be payable to a borough councillor in respect of full meetings of political groups held at Borough Council premises and specifically related to the business of the Borough Council on not more than 15 occasions in the period commencing with the day of the Annual Meeting of the Council in any year and terminating on the day preceding the Annual Meeting in the following year."

## **SCHEDULE 6**

### **IT FOR COUNCILLORS**

On request, the Council provides all Councillors with a computer or a tablet device, a printer and appropriate software and support.

If a Councillor chooses to use their own device no payment is made for this.

No payments are made towards home broadband or other connectivity costs.