

I. INTRODUCTION

The Regulatory Context

- 1.1. The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) is convened under the Local Authorities (Councillors' Allowances) England Regulations 2003 (SI 1021) and subsequent amendments to the regulations (SI 2003/1022 and SI 2003/1692 ['the Regulations']).
- 1.2. The Regulations require all local authorities to set up and maintain an advisory IRP to review and provide advice about the allowances to be paid to Councillors. All Councils are required to convene their Panel and seek its advice before they make any changes or amendments to their allowances scheme and they must 'pay regard' to the Panel's recommendations before setting a new or amended Councillors' Allowances Scheme.

2. Panel

- 2.1. Plymouth City Council's Independent Remuneration Panel Members are:

Duncan Currall	Retired
Bryony Houlden	Bryony Houlden is Chief Executive of South West Councils.
Jane Hopkinson	Jane Hopkinson is former University Secretary of the University of Plymouth and current Independent Trustee of the University of Plymouth Students' Union

- 2.2. Members of the Panel may have some contact with the Council. In the interest of openness and transparency their links, where they occur, are stated below:

- **Bryony Houlden** is Chief Executive of South West Councils, a Councillor organisation of the 29 local authorities across the South West including Plymouth City Council.

- 2.3. The formal Terms of Reference of the Panel are attached as Appendix I.

3. Objective of the Review

- 3.1. The Panel was asked to review three elements of the Councillors' allowance scheme, informed by benchmarking and other relevant information and specifically to consider –

- allowances paid to the Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board;
- payments to Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Committees;
- the application of the Local Government Association’s model Parental Leave Policy;
- the addition of a provision for members to forgo allowances.

4. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. The IRP has undertaken a review of the Plymouth City Council Councillors’ Allowances Scheme and makes the following recommendations for amendments.

1	The Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance equal to that of the current Scrutiny Panel Chairs. This allowance will be backdated to May 2024, when the current Chair took on the role.
2	The Panel does not recommend further changes to the Special Responsibility Allowance for Vice Chairs at this time.
3	The Panel is convened to review allowances for scrutiny again in 12 months to gather more information on how the new structure is working.
4	The Panel noted the cross-party approach to the review of the parental leave policy and observed that such a policy is already in place in many councils across the country. The Panel recommends that the council adopts the model scheme.
5	The Panel recommends that a provision to enable Councillors to forgo their allowances is added to the Members’ allowance scheme.

5. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

5.1. The Panel considered the following as part of the review:

- Historic iterations of the role of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, including previous levels of Special Responsibility allowance applied to the role.
- The new Overview and Scrutiny terms of reference in Part D of the constitution.
- Data concerning the number and average duration of committee meetings and instances of when the Vice Chair has taken the Chair.
- CIPFA comparator information for the remuneration of Vice Chairs.
- The Model LGA Parental Leave Policy as discussed by the cross-party group established by Council.

5.2. The CIPFA family group of councils included:

Bournemouth	Portsmouth
Bristol	Swindon
Brighton and Hove	North East Lincolnshire
Medway	Warrington
Southampton	Stoke-on-Trent
Southend-on-Sea	Telford and Wrekin
Derby	York

5.3. The Panel met virtually once to receive and distil the evidence.

5.4. The following findings and recommendations follow the order of the Panel's Terms of Reference.

6. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board Special Responsibility Allowance

- 6.1. The Panel observed that there is no nationally prescribed level of remuneration for this role. Consequently, it is the responsibility of each Council to determine the appropriate level, taking into account the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.
- 6.2. The structure of scrutiny varies among local authorities, with many not having a comparable role within their governance frameworks.
- 6.3. In the previous scrutiny structure, each panel chair was responsible for validating the reasons for urgent decisions. The Panel was informed that, following changes to the scrutiny structure, this responsibility now rests solely with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.
- 6.4. The Panel acknowledged that the new Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board holds a significant level of responsibility. However, as this is a new role the Panel did not find sufficient evidence that this level of responsibility is equivalent to that of a Cabinet Member. After reviewing the benchmarking evidence, the Panel concluded that, at this time, the evidence supports a Special Responsibility Allowance in line with that of other panel chairs.
- 6.5. Panel members agreed to review the system of allowances related to scrutiny in 12 months, once the new structure has been in operation. Should significant new evidence emerge that impacts the level of Special Responsibility Allowance for this (or other) role, they are willing to convene sooner to reconsider.

Recommendation 2

Vice Chair Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)

6.6. The Panel reconsidered the remuneration of the Vice-Chairs of the scrutiny panels. They agreed that there was insufficient evidence to deviate from the established position set in 2019 and reconfirmed in 2023. The Panel concluded that the special responsibilities had not significantly changed, and therefore, no recommendation for change to allowances for these roles has been made at this time.

Recommendation 3:

Parental Leave Policy

6.7. The Panel noted the cross-party work which had been undertaken in respect of the parental leave policy and the full Council agreement that such a policy should be included as part of the Members Allowance Scheme.

6.8. The panel noted that similar arrangements existed in many local authorities across the country and were a key part of widening access for those who wish to stand as local councillors.

6.9. The panel agreed that the parental leave policy should form part of the Members' Allowance Scheme.

Recommendation 4

Option to forgo allowances

6.10. The Panel wishes to record their view that the Allowances are in place to recognise the roles and responsibilities that Councillors undertake. There is already an element of 'public service' factored into the Allowances placing an expectation on Councillors that they will give some of their time freely. However, the Panel recognises that Members should have the choice not to claim their allowance, the Panel supports them in wishing to do so recommends that a provision to enable Councillors to forgo their allowances is added to the Members' allowance scheme.

Appendix I

Independent Remuneration Panel Terms of Reference

1. Functions

- 1.1. The Panel carries out the Council's responsibilities under the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) Regulation 2003 as amended to convene an Independent Panel to make recommendations to the Council about the level of Members Allowances.

2. Specific Responsibilities

- 2.1. Overall, to recommend the level of allowances to be paid to Members, including special responsibility allowances, pension rights for elected Members and allowances payable to co-opted members.
- 2.2. The Panel will recommend:
 - 2.2.1. The amount of basic allowance that should be payable to elected Members;
 - 2.2.2. The categories of Members who should receive special responsibility allowances and the amount of such an allowance;
 - 2.2.3. The travel and subsistence scheme, the amount of the allowance and how it should be paid;
 - 2.2.4. The payment of an allowance for co-opted members and the amount of that allowance;
 - 2.2.5. The payment of an allowance in respect of arranging for the care of Members' children and other dependants, the amount of this allowance and the means by which it should be determined;
 - 2.2.6. Whether the allowances should be backdated to the beginning of the municipal year;
 - 2.2.7. Whether annual adjustments of allowance levels may be made by reference to an index, and, if so, for how long such a measure should run.

Appendix 2 – Members Allowance Scheme

COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES

2024-2025

The payment of allowances to elected members of local authorities is governed by the Local Government (Members' Allowances England) Regulations 2003 ("the regulations"). This scheme is effective from 1 April 2024.

This scheme provides guidance in respect of:

- A basic allowance
- Special responsibility allowances
- A dependent carers' allowance
- Travel allowances for duties undertaken within Plymouth City Council area
- Travel and subsistence allowances for duties undertaken outside the Plymouth City Council area; and
- An allowance to co-opted and independent members

Allowance	No. in receipt	£
Basic Allowance	57	£12,752.00
Lord Mayors Allowance	1	£17,715.00
Deputy Lord Mayors Allowance	0	£5,846.00
Leader	1	£38,255.00
Deputy Leader	1	£26,917.00
Cabinet Members	8	£25,497.00
Committee Chairs (Scrutiny x 5, Planning, Audit and Governance and Licensing x 2)	8	£12,752.00
Leader Largest minority Party	1	£12,752.00
Deputy Leader Largest Minority Party	0	£6,376.00
Vice-Chair Planning	1	£6,376.00
Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board	0	£6,376.00
Vice Chair Licensing	1	£3,188.00
Leader of other minority party	2	£1,000
Co-opted Members	1	£1,500

All allowances are subject to annual increase in line with staff pay awards. 2024/25 not yet applied.

TRAVEL ALLOWANCES AND SUBSISTENCE EXPENSES

Car, Motorcycle and Bicycle Allowance Rates are set in lines with those paid to officers of the authority. Existing travel and subsistence arrangements will continue, i.e. that Members are entitled to claim such allowances necessarily met in carrying out their official duties as councillors outside of the city boundary (in line with the officers' scheme).

Travel within Plymouth and peninsula (counties of Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Dorset)
HMRC RATE:

- 45p per business mile up to 10,000 miles
- 25p per business mile over 10,000 miles

'Out of Peninsula rate':

- 25p per business mile

Low emission car rate (travel within Plymouth and Peninsula)

- Cars with up to 110g/km CO2 emissions, and/or in tax band A or B:
- 50p per business mile up to 10,000 miles 29p per business mile over 10,000 miles

HMRC passenger rate:

- 5p per business mile per passenger Meals and subsistence rates
- Breakfast
- Irregular starter before 6am. This rate does not apply if employee regularly leaves home before 6am. Maximum claim - £5

One meal rate

Where an employee is away from the normal place of work for a period of more than five hours.
Maximum claim - £5

Two meals rate

Where an employee is away from the normal place of work for a period of more than 10 hours.
Maximum claim - £10

Late evening meal

Irregular late finisher - where an employee is away from the normal place of work outside of their normal working hours and after 8pm.
Maximum claim - £10

Only a maximum of three meals can be reimbursed per day. Alcohol cannot be purchased within the allowance.

Overnight stays

Accommodation will be reimbursed for overnight stays where it is impractical for a day-return or where the overnight stay represents better value for money. Reimbursements will be made when presented with a valid VAT receipt.

Bed and breakfast outside of London (M25): Maximum payment - £65

Bed and breakfast within London/M25 boundaries: Maximum payment - £85

DEPENDENT CARERS' ALLOWANCE

Members are entitled to claim for the duration of the approved duty plus reasonable travelling time. The allowance should not be payable to a member of the claimant's own household. See below.

Approved duties and claiming childcare and dependent carers' allowances

If a councillor is responsible for the care of children, elderly relatives or people with disabilities, childcare and dependent carers' allowances may be claimed (against receipts). The maximum period of the entitlement is the duration of the approved duty plus reasonable travelling time. The allowance should not be payable to a member of the claimant's own household.

Councillors undertaking approved duties may claim Travel, Subsistence and Dependent carers allowance unless remuneration and/or expenses are provided by the body to which the approved duty relates.

Approved duties are:

- attending a committee, sub-committee or outside body meeting
- attendance at any other authorised meeting (provided that it is a meeting to which Members of at least two political groups have been invited)
- attendance at a meeting of any association of authorities of which the authority is a member
- attendance at any Cabinet meeting
- performance of any duty connected with the opening of tenders
- performance of any duty requiring the authority to inspect or authorise the inspection of any premises
- performance of any duty in connection with arrangements for the attendance of pupils at any school approved for the purposes of section 342 (approval of non-maintained special schools) of the Education Act 1996
- attendance at development and learning events
- the carrying out of any other duty approved by the authority for the purpose of or in connection with the discharge of the functions of the authority or any of its committees or sub-committees