

Appendix A:

**The Report of the Herefordshire
Independent Remuneration Panel**

13 May 2021

Introduction

1. The following is a synopsis of the proceedings and recommendations made by the independent remuneration panel (the Panel) appointed by Herefordshire Council to review the current Members' Allowances Scheme. The Panel has been set up and convened under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI1021) and subsequent amendments to the regulations (SI2003/1022 and SI 2003/1692 (the Regulations)).
2. The Regulations require all local authorities to set up and maintain an independent remuneration panel to review and provide advice about the allowances to be paid to Members. All councils are required to convene their remuneration panel and have due regard to their recommendations before setting a new or amended Members' Allowances Scheme (the Scheme).

The Independent Remuneration Panel

3. Herefordshire Council's Independent Remuneration Panel consists of the following Members:
 - **Richard Garnett** – Chairperson
 - **Rowena Green** – Panel Member
 - **Val Ainsworth** – Panel Member
4. Two Panel Members, Rowena Green and Val Ainsworth were appointed following a recruitment exercise in 2021 and in accordance with the council's recruitment policy. Richard Garnett, the Chairperson, was appointed in 2017 and is an existing member of the independent panel.
5. The Panel were supported by the democratic services manager and a trainee solicitor from the council's legal and democratic services team. Their roles were to record proceedings, take the organisational lead in providing the evidence base and provide technical support and advice. In addition, officers provided opportunities for the Panel to meet with the political group leaders and the Chairman of the Council to consider their view in relation to the roles and responsibilities of councillors.
6. The panel would like to record their thanks to all those who provided evidence during the review. Their insights and evidence has been considered with care and attention in the deliberations of the Panel.

Panel proceedings

Date	Items considered
14 April, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training presentation• Agreeing terms of reference and principles for the review• Agreeing Chairperson
22 April, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consideration of the online members survey• Meeting Group Leaders
28 April, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consideration of the benchmarking evidence collated in relation to the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances• Triangulation with the results of the members online survey

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering the feedback provided by the Group Leaders following the meeting on 22 April, 2021. Consideration of additional survey of members.
5 May, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic Allowance calculation Agreeing recommendations for the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance
6 May, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreeing draft report and recommendations Agreeing the 'other recommendations'
7 May, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreeing the final report
11 -12 May, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email correspondence to sign off final draft report

The Independent Panel: Terms of Reference

7. At the meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel held on 14/04/2021, the panel agreed that it would retain, from the 2017 IRP, the following terms of reference:

- (i) The Panel has been convened to make recommendations to consider:
 - a) The amount of the Basic Allowance for all Members.
 - b) Whether special responsibility allowances should be payable and the amount of such an allowance.
 - c) Whether childcare and Dependant Carers' allowance should be payable and the amount of such an allowance.
 - d) Whether adjustments to the level of allowances should continue to be linked to the National Joint Council (NJC) index, and if so, which index and how long that index should apply.
 - e) Whether payment of allowances should be backdated in cases where a scheme is amended at a time which would affect allowances payable in that year.
 - f) Whether travelling and subsistence allowances should be payable and the amount of such an allowance.
- (ii) The Panel were required to conduct their work in time for the council meeting scheduled for 21 May 2021.
- (iii) The panel will reconvene at such other times as may be required over the next 4 years.

8. It is not within the panel's remit to take into consideration the budget implications of its recommendations.

Underpinning Principles of the Review

9. The Panel confirmed that their deliberations should also continue to be underpinned by the following principles set out by the [Dame Jane Roberts Councillors Commission](#), Members Remuneration, Models, Issues, Incentives and Barriers, 2007:

- P1:** The basic allowance should encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds and with a wide range of skills to serve as local councillors
- P2:** Those who participate in, and contribute to, the democratic process should not suffer unreasonable financial disadvantage
- P3:** Councillors should be compensated for their work and the compensation should have regard to the full range of commitment and complexity of their roles
- P4:** The system should be transparent, simple to operate and understand
- P5:** The system should not encourage the proliferation of meetings or provoke councillors into spending more time on council business than is necessary.

P6: The level of remuneration should relate to a commonly accepted benchmark

The Panel - operational Context:

10. The Panel emphasises that its role is to undertake an independent review of Herefordshire Council's Scheme of Allowances, with a view to determining the appropriate level of remuneration for the role of a Member.
11. The Panel understands that the council has faced, like all local authorities, significant new financial pressures following recent flooding events and managing the local response to the public health emergency. As such the panel acknowledges that in recommending any increase to the allowances there will be a budgetary impact.
12. The Panel balanced their considerations by recognising that Herefordshire Councillors provide a community leadership role, representing their electorate, and many are responsible for taking informed local decisions. Many of those decisions carry with them statutory and regulatory responsibilities. Never has it been more important to have the right calibre of councillor providing local leadership in our county.
13. The Panel were made aware of the forthcoming constitutional considerations that the council will be considering later this year (2021). While it is not possible to pre-determine any changes that may result from the full Council deliberations, where it has been practical to do so, the Panel have sought to 'future proof' their recommendations.

The evidence base presented to the panel.

Quantitative Data:

14. An online questionnaire was sent to all members on behalf of the panel. It gathered information on the views and experiences of member in relation to the time commitment given to the role of being a councillor and the levels of remuneration members receive. 34 out of 52 councillors¹ responded, a return rate of just over 65%. A summary of the responses is attached at Appendix B.
15. In the first survey councillors returned a significantly higher number of responses in the 12+ hour's worked category. Following the first questionnaire, it was not possible to ascertain a reliable 'average' figure of the time members spent on their respective tasks. A repeat survey was undertaken of questions 1 and 3 which focussed the amount of hours spent by members on their principal councillor related duties.
16. The second survey differed by providing a wider range of time allocations for members to select. It was sent out on 30 April, 2021 and ran until 6 May. The updated questions allowed members of the panel a greater ability to analyse and aggregate the data to produce a more reliable average monthly figure of hours spent by members. The results of that survey are set out in Appendix C.
17. The Panel also considered statistical benchmarking data from a range of other local authority settings. This cohort of local authorities had been selected on the basis that they

¹ Both surveys were undertaken before the 6 May 2021 local by-election in Newton Farm Ward.- therefore only 52 members were able to respond.

are statistically similar to Herefordshire. The data included comparisons of Herefordshire Council's² data in the following areas:

- I. Basic and special responsibility allowance (actuals)
- II. Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) calculations (as a multiple of the basic allowance)
- III. Allowance cost to the public purse – per local resident
- IV. Mileage and subsistence rates
- V. Miscellaneous - ICT provision; parish councils per county and dependency allowances provided
- VI. Comparisons of the frequency of meetings from data from May 2015 to December 2016 with data from May 2019 to September 2020³ and data September 2020 to May 2021.

18. The benchmarking data – which is publicly available via each of the respective council's website – is set out in Appendix D.
19. In considering the benchmarking information the Panel acknowledged that each local authority had unique characteristics and measuring similarities was subjective and not always directly comparable. However, the Panel did take into account Herefordshire's relative position within the benchmarking data.

Qualitative data.

20. At the outset of the review the Panel agreed that they wished to conduct face to face meetings with the political group leaders and the Chairman of the Council.
21. All group leaders were invited to meet the panel on 22 April. The Panel met with the Chairman on 6 May.
22. In addition, a number of members volunteered their comments, questions and views via email correspondence with the Democratic Services Manager and in conjunction with the member's survey. The principal points raised by those members were summarised and shared with the Panel. It was explained that this additional information may be taken in to account as part of the Panel considerations.

Triangulation.

23. Benchmarking data alone was not wholly reliable given the variation in local authority working and remuneration. The Panel triangulated their evidence where it was helpful, and in some instances, essential to do so. For example, comparing qualitative evidence from councillors within the surveys and meetings, with quantitative evidence presented in the benchmarking data and member surveys.

Discussion and Recommendations

Applying the changes set out in this report.

24. In reviewing the scheme of allowances, the panel recommends that its proposals are implemented from 21st May 2021.

²

To note: LA working practices vary considerably, comparisons have therefore been made on a 'closest match' principle

³

To note: On 25 March 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Parliament passed the Coronavirus Act 2020 ("the 2020 Act"), This enabled LAs to temporarily suspend their requirement to hold an annual meeting in March/April/May. Herefordshire council's annual meeting was held in September 2020

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Members' Allowance Scheme be implemented following the 21st May 2021 council meeting.
2. That the Independent Remuneration Panel reconvene after new constitutional arrangements have been confirmed to explore whether there are any further changes required.

Considerations of the Basic Allowance

25. In accordance with the Regulations, each local authority must make provision in its scheme of allowances for a basic, flat rate, allowance payable to all elected Members of the authority.
26. The Regulations set out that the Basic Allowance states that this should include: *"the time commitment of all councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers, constituents and attendance at political group meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of their home. Having established what local councillors do and the hours which are devoted to these tasks local authorities will need to take a view on the rate at which and the number of hours for which a councillor ought to be remunerated"*
27. The Panel was advised that in accordance with statutory guidance, an element of the role of an elected councillor must be viewed as voluntary and unpaid.
28. The Panel heard representations from councillors who challenged this categorisation. It was asserted that the role of a councillor is driven by public service. Moreover, that over time, those who choose to stand and are committed to serve as a councillor are often drawn in to taking on increasing levels of responsibility. These combining factors often mean that the 'voluntary' aspects of the role generates unrealistic expectations on members in terms of the time they spend in relation to the remuneration councillors can expect to receive.
29. In coming to its proposal in relation to the basic allowance, the Panel considered the:
 - (a) Time taken to carry out the role.
 - (b) Proportion of the allowance which is voluntary and unpaid
 - (c) Rate at which Members' time should be valued. And,
 - (d) Any other items which should be included in the basic allowance.

(A) Time taken to carry out the role

30. In order for the panel to assess the time taken to carry out the role the panel considered the results of the Member online survey of which there were 34 (out of 52) responses. As noted above, it was not possible to provide an accurate average figure for the time members spend on councillor duties over the course of a month.
31. The second recorded survey, where 26 members (a 50% return) responded, showed that the average number of hours per month required to carry out their roles was 71.5 hours.

The Panel noted that 71.5 hours was a decrease of 23.5 hours per month from the previous members' survey in 2016.

Triangulating this evidence:

32. The Panel balanced the survey results in conjunction with their discussions with Group Leaders. It was noted that many members do above and beyond their expected duties. Group Leaders noted their required attendance at parish council meetings and responding to community/constituency based enquiries which are routinely outside of normal working hours.
33. Further, that some members, particularly those in more rural wards often have a high number of parish councils distributed over a wide geographic range. This means that those members have relatively higher costs than members in market town or city wards.
34. It was clear that in responses provided by a number of members in both member surveys that their time allocations were only a partial picture of the total hours that they give to their roles. Specific examples were provided to contextualise this – noting the amount of reading time, briefings as being significant in terms of time required by members.
35. The Panel recognised that 2020 to 2021 has been an 'atypical' year. On the one hand the relative success of virtual working has helped to address the rural/urban dimension to ward member working practices. All members have been attending their parish council meetings remotely and constituency work has been impacted during the Covid 19 public health emergency. This has dramatically reduced the amount of travel time required for some members who have large geographic range of their respective wards. It was conceivable that this may be a factor in the relative reduction in hours presented within the data from the members survey.
36. While virtual public meetings are no longer possible it is highly likely that council business will, over the longer term, have greater flexibility to allow members and members of the public to attend meetings remotely. The Panel noted the Government's commitment to changing primary legislation with the anticipated effect of allowing remote attendance at local authority meetings.
37. The panel were also advised that 2020 and 2021 had seen reasonably significant increases in additional public meetings. Notably:
 - I. A number of significant decisions taken by Cabinet during November to February 2020 to 2021;
 - II. An increase in extraordinary council meetings, since August 2020,
 - III. Increases in the number of Planning and Regulatory meetings and
 - IV. Increasing numbers of Audit and Governance meetings

The proportion of the allowance which is voluntary and unpaid

38. The Panel was unable to gain conclusive evidence to support a specific percentage in respect of the voluntary part of the role. However, the Panel were persuaded by the evidence presented in both surveys and from group leaders that, in some cases, members are giving significant higher amounts of time per month to their role as a councillor.
39. In light of this evidence and that a 50% and 33.3% voluntary discount had been approved at the council meeting on 22 May 2015, the Panel decided that a 33.3% discount was a more

appropriate and realistic given that all members had completed their mandatory training. In reaching this conclusion the Panel considered two further triangulation points.

- I. That applying 50% discount to the average monthly hours of 71.5hrs would actually equate to a 'real term' decrease in the basic allowance. The opinion of the Panel is that Herefordshire is second to bottom in many of the comparisons with the councils included in the benchmarking exercise. To reduce the basic allowance further is not in the best interest of the council or electors of Herefordshire and agreed that a modest and justified increase in allowances shall be recommended.
- II. That applying the 33.3% discount provided a more suitable recognition of the time members give to their roles as councillors and that all members had completed their mandatory training. In applying this discount, the Panel felt that this gave a more consistent weighting (47 hours per month) when compared to previous surveys of members. The Panel recognised the considerable lengths all councillors go to in serving their community, often during unsociable hours. In addition, that this element of public service was more significant than was reflected in the survey of members.

Rate at which Members' time should be valued

40. From a review of the benchmarking data, Herefordshire Council pays our members the 9th lowest basic allowance within the cohort of comparator local authorities. Only Rutland, a much smaller local authority and county to Herefordshire, has a lower basic allowance. The Panel were unanimously of the view that this position needed correcting and that Herefordshire Councillors should receive a basic allowance more commensurate to other local authorities within the benchmarking cohort.
41. After discussion and review, the Panel considered the annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis (i.e. based on where people work regardless of where they live) as the monetary basis of the calculation. They also considered the Annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis (i.e. based on where people live, regardless of where they work). See also appendix F. Both sets of data are produced by the Office of National Statistics, NOMIS⁴.
 - I. The hourly rates for 2020 from the where they live data presented an hourly rate of £14.54p
 - II. The hourly rates for 2020 from the where they work data presented an hourly rate of £14.96p
42. Both of these rates were lower, in real terms, than the hourly rate used in the previous IRP. The last IRP considerations noted that the rate of £15.72, used in the last IRP report, sat between HC8 SCP35 and SCP36 and was not out of line with officer pay. The Panel noted that the mean hourly figure, within this current HC8 range, for 2020 was £16.44p. Given that the Basic Allowance has, like officers pay, over the last four years increased by National Joint Council (NJC) uplift rates, the Panel felt that the hourly rate paid to officers (at the HC8 mid-point equivalent) was an appropriate figure to apply to their calculations to.

Calculating the Basic Allowance

43. The Panel concluded that the formula for calculating the Basic Allowance should be as follows:

⁴ This is the source for official labour market statistics.

71.5 monthly hours less a public services discount of 33.3% multiplied by the mean HC8 officers hourly rate multiplied by 12 (months). As follows:

$$((71.5 - 33.3\%) \times £16.44) \times 12 = £9,394.28$$

Any other items that should be included in the Basic Allowance

44. In order for the Panel to assess any other items that should be included in the Basic Allowance, the panel considered the All Member online survey (Appendix B) of which there were 34 responses.
45. Members raised the following items that the Panel felt compelled to consider as part of the Basic Allowance:
 - I. Attendance at parish council meetings
 - II. Attendance at cabinet meeting
 - III. Incidental cost involved in conducting the role from their homes
46. The Panel considered each of the above points and concluded that all three items were included within the Basic Allowance. Given the reduced need for travel as a result of Covid 19, the fact that the council provides lap-tops and, since May 2019, smart phone technology to support members working from home.
47. While in the short term councillors will be required to return to physical committee and parish council meetings, the Panel were content that the recommended Basic Allowance is sufficient to cover these aspects of the role.

Benchmarking

48. The Panel acknowledges that the proposed Basic Allowance of £9,394.28 represents an increase of 15.5% compared to the current Basic Allowance of £7,935.00.
49. The Panel recognises that, in isolation, this increase looks large. However, it believes it can be justified due to the following reasons:
 - I. Benchmarking showed that it was not out of line with other comparative authorities. The average basic allowance, within the cohort of local authorities, is £10,020.95
 - II. It corrects, in the Panels view, the disproportionately low position of Herefordshire Councils Basic Allowance within the benchmarking cohort – raising Herefordshire position to 7th lowest basic allowance (if the recommendation is accepted).
 - III. The Panel considered that a 47 hour per month role paid at HC8 mean hourly earnings should not deter any individual from standing for Council at the May 2023 local elections.
 - IV. This hourly rate per month was also very similar to the previous calculation, and there was consistent with previous panel considerations.
 - V. The compelling evidence that 21 councillors responding to the first members survey noted that the rate of allowances was a significant factor in their consideration to stand as a councillor. Some going further to say they simply couldn't carry out the role without financial support.
 - VI. That in real terms, the basic allowance has only increased by inflationary rates for the last eight years. As such, the Panel felt that a correction is well overdue.

50. The Panel were satisfied that the basic allowance proposed was in line with other comparative authorities, brings about an overdue correction to the position of Herefordshire, and recognises the considerable work that Herefordshire Councillors undertake on behalf of their communities.

Indexing

51. In order that the proposed rate keeps pace with the future earnings, the Panel proposes that the Basic Allowance continues to be indexed by the annual pay award of Herefordshire Council officers for the next four years, the National Joint Council (NJC).

Mandatory Training Element of Basic Allowance

52. It was noted that the Panel's last report had recommended a lower rate basic allowance be payable to all members until all relevant mandatory training had been completed. This recommendation was adopted and put into practice following the last local elections, May 2019. The Panel recommends this practice continues and endorses the proposals currently being considered to hold refresher training for members two years into the electoral term of the council.
53. The views of the Panel remain that good democracy is based on good processes for meetings and decision making and that all councillors should receive either refreshed mandatory training or new training (dependent on their experience) to ensure their Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Further, that a number of members, notably the new intake of councillors, have indicated that their initial training following election was quite a lot to take in, especially for those members new to local authority working.
54. The panel was also pleased to note the introduction of a Member Development Strategy and development that is underway for a members training programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3: That the Basic Allowance be increased to £9394.28 from 21 May, 2021**
- 4. That the Basic Allowance continue to be (NJC) indexed linked by the annual pay award for Herefordshire Council officers until 2023/24, or until such time the IRP reconvenes to review allowances**
- 5. That the two-step mandatory training, introduced in May 2019, is repeated two years after local elections and linked to maintaining the full basic allowance upon completion. For example, following local elections in May 2023, the first wave of mandatory training is undertaken in line with current practices; this training is then required to be undertaken again (in May 2025) after two years of being in position.**
- 6. That if a secondary mandatory training programme is implemented that this is also linked to maintaining the full Basic Allowance, If members fail to complete a second round of mandatory training the basic allowance will revert back to 75% of the recommended Basic Allowance (£7,045.71) until such time that all training has been completed.**

Special Responsibility Allowances - Legislation and Guidance

55. The Government legislation prescribes that the following roles may be eligible for a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA):
- I. Group Leader
 - II. Executive (Cabinet) Member
 - III. Chair of a committee or sub committee
 - IV. Representative of the council
 - V. Member of a committee or sub-committee meeting with exceptional frequency or over an exceptional period
 - VI. Political Group Spokesperson
 - VII. Member of an Adoption Panel
 - VIII. Member of a committee dealing with a function relating to licensing activity
 - IX. Any other activities – requiring an amount of time and equal to or greater than the other roles described
56. It is the role of the Panel to assess the eligible roles and determine if SRAs should be attributed to the role and what level of remuneration should be recommended.
57. In assessing the roles and their eligibility to attract an SRA the Panel acknowledges that the Allowances are to remunerate elected Members who perform additional responsibilities over and above the roles and expenses covered by the Basic Allowance.

Process for arriving at the SRA

58. The Panel had discussions in relation to assessing the roles, considered the remuneration that was appropriate for the varied roles and agreed the following approach:
- X. Review the roles and responsibilities details supplied
 - XI. Set the criteria for assessing the roles
 - XII. Score each role against the criteria
 - XIII. Total the scores and rank the roles in order and into bands
 - XIV. Consider which (if any) of the roles meet criteria for an SRA
 - XV. Agree how the remuneration would be reached
 - XVI. Compare the remuneration against the benchmarking information

Gather and Review Evidence

59. The Panel was keen to gain a good understanding of the nature of the roles that the SRA was paid for and ascertain a factual position of the requirement of each role. The Panel gathered the evidence from the following sources:
- XVII. The relevant sections of the Council's new constitution.
 - XVIII. Verbal and written evidence from the Group Leaders.
 - XIX. Contents of the role profiles
 - XX. Advice from the Monitoring Officer
 - XXI. Data in relation to committee meeting frequency
 - XXII. All Member online survey (Appendix B and B).

Criteria for assessing the roles

60. The Panel agreed that it would use the same criteria as was previously used in 2017 to assess each of the roles:
- I. Responsibility – the delegated authority to take decisions
 - II. Accountability – scope of the work covered by the SRA and the number of meetings involved
 - III. Time spent

Scoring each role against the criteria

61. The panel assessed each of the roles against the criteria scoring them in the following way:
- 0 – None
 - 1 – Low
 - 2 - Medium
 - 3 – High

Bandings

62. The scores for each role were collated to gain a total score for each role. The Panel ranked the roles based on the total score.
63. The Panel triangulated their review and scoring with the previous Panel's scores. Given that the roles set out alongside the SRAs have not changed significantly since May 2017, the Panel were minded to score the SRAs consistently with the previous IRP report. However, the Panel also noted the changes being considered by the rethinking governance group, in the future, as this might introduce strengthened roles for some committees. The Panel also considered the balance of risk and responsibility in relation to other benchmarked data within the cohort of comparison local authorities.
64. The Panel wishes to note its willingness to reconvene and review allowances again if and when these changes are agreed by council.
65. The Panel then agreed which of the roles it considered significant enough to receive an SRA. The Panel deemed that the scores fell clearly into 4 bands as detailed in Appendix E.

Leader of the Council

66. The Panel considered how the remuneration for each of the bandings would be arrived at and they referred to previous Independent Remuneration Panel reports. The Panel noted that the leader's current allowance is approximately 4 times the Basic Allowance. If this multiple was used, and if Herefordshire Council were to agree to the recommended new Basic Allowance, it would lift Herefordshire Council's Leader's SRA to the second highest within the benchmarking cohort (£37,577.12).
67. The Panel were also mindful of the views that some members had expressed in relation to correcting some of the wide disparities within some of the SRAs. For instance, while the role of the Leader clearly carries greatest risk, accountability and time (it is arguably a full time role) the remuneration attached to it is significantly higher than all other SRAs. Further, that the nearest SRA – that of Cabinet Members – which it has been argued carry similar areas of risk, accountability and time are significantly lower.

68. The panel were of the view that a multiplier of 3.5, instead of 4, should be applied to this SRA. This would amount to a real term increase, but would constitute a more moderate increase commensurate with wider evidence received during this review.

$$\text{Basic Allowance of } £9,394.28 \times 3.5 = £32,879.98$$

69. The Panel acknowledges that using a multiplier of 3.5 x the recommended Basic Allowance would increase the SRA from £31,741 to £32,879.98 which is an increase of 3.4%.

RECOMMENDATION

- 7. That the SRA for the role of the Leader of the Council be set at £32,879.98 per year which is calculated as 3.5 x the recommended Basic Allowance.**

Cabinet Members

70. The Cabinet Member role received high scores in each of the categories and the Panel considered that this was a significant role, with individual delegated authority to make decisions. The Panel agreed that when taking all aspects of the roles into consideration that the remuneration for the Cabinet Member role should continue to be 1.75 x the recommended Basic Allowance.
71. The Panel reviewed this figure against the benchmarking data and noted that Herefordshire Council's Cabinet Member SRAs sit at mid-point within benchmarking data. The Panel concluded that there this is a fair reflection of where this SRA should sit within the benchmarking data.

RECOMMENDATION

- 8. That the SRA for the role of Cabinet Member be set at £16,439.99 per year which is a 1.75 x the recommended Basic Allowance.**

72. The Panel concluded that the SRA for the roles should be set at 1.75 x the recommended Basic Allowance. The Panel acknowledges that this is an increase of £2,552 (equivalent to an 15.5%) per annum to the current SRA.

Chairman of the Council

73. The Chairman of the Council role scored lower than the Leader and Cabinet Member roles. In the assessment of the role, the Panel considered that this role was very different in nature to that of the Leader and Cabinet Members. It carries no direct decision making powers, but it does carry with it responsibility to chair council meetings as well as conducting civic duties. In discussions, it was noted that this role was of reputational importance to the Council, especially so since the advent of video streaming council meetings.
74. The Panel considered the benchmarking information but concluded that not all authorities had the same governance arrangements and the role of the Chairman of the Council differed from authority to authority. A number of local authorities within the cohort also paid an SRA to their vice chairpersons. However, the panel were also mindful that the Chairman of the Council SRA in Herefordshire is the highest within the cohort of local authorities. The

Panel also recognised that Herefordshire Council does appoint a Vice-Chair, but unlike some local authorities within the cohort, Herefordshire does not provide an allowance for vice-chairpersons.

75. The panel agreed that the benchmarking information for this role was one factor it should consider. But additional weight should be given to the profile and reputational prominence of this role.
76. The Panel concluded that the SRA for the role should be set at 1.2 x the recommended Basic Allowance. The Panel acknowledges that this is an increase of £1,353.14 (equivalent to 12%) per annum to the current SRA.
- 77.

RECOMMENDATION

- 9. That the SRA for the role of Chairman of the Council be set at £11,273.14 per year which is a 1.2 x the recommended Basic Allowance.**

Chairman of Adults Wellbeing Scrutiny; Young People and Children's Wellbeing Scrutiny and General Scrutiny

78. The Panel discussed the evidence and assumptions based on the existing three Scrutiny Committees. There was evidence to show that there was a difference in time commitment between the Cabinet Member role and the Scrutiny Chair role. However, the panel also acknowledged the increasingly important role that the council wishes to place on increasing scrutiny's influence over the development of new policies and decisions.
79. The Panel concluded that the SRA for the roles should be set at 1.2 x the recommended Basic Allowance. The Panel acknowledges that this is an increase of £1,353.14 (equivalent to 12%) per annum to the current SRA for the three Scrutiny Committees.
80. The Panel considered the benchmarking data and noted that this would make the Herefordshire Scrutiny Chairs the third highest SRA compared to the comparator English authorities. The Panel concluded that it could not compare the role with other local authorities, as each Council operated with a different governance model and the detailed information required was not available for a comparison. Further, that the Panel recognises the increasing profile the council is seeking to give to scrutiny and wished to build this factor in to their considerations.
81. The panel noted its willingness to convene a further review, should the council wish to consider this, once any constitutional changes had been proposed and approved by the council.

RECOMMENDATION

- 10. That the SRA for the role of Chairpersons of the Scrutiny Committees be set at £11,273.14 per year which is a 1.2 x the recommended Basic Allowance.**

Chairman of Planning and Regulatory Committee

82. The Panel had detailed discussions and noted that the scoring for the role was the same as Chairman of the Council and the Scrutiny Chairman. The role is an important one and the committee meets to deal with the most significant planning matters dealt with by the council in its' role as a planning authority.
83. The Panel agreed that the remuneration SRA for this role should be 1.2 x Basic Allowance. The Panel acknowledges that this is an increase of £1,353.14 (equivalent to 12%) per annum to the current SRA for the Planning and Regulatory committee.
84. The Panel considered the benchmarking data and noted that this would make the Chairman of Planning and Regulatory Committee the second highest SRA compared to the comparator English authorities.

RECOMMENDATION

- 11. That the SRA for the role of the Chairman of the Planning and Regulatory committee be set at £11,273.14 per year which is a 1.2 x the recommended Basic Allowance.**

Chairman of Licensing Sub Committee

85. The Panel noted that there is a standing Chairman of the Licensing Sub Committee and the committee discharges the licensing regulatory functions of the Council. The Sub-Committee is convened on an as required basis. The Panel noted the lack of consistent benchmarking data for this type of committee in other local authority settings. As such, like for like comparisons are not wholly reliable. However, of the SRAs that had licensing as part or all of their principal purpose varied considerably. Within this range the highest SRA was £9,444 and the lowest was £2,878. The mean SRA across the cohort of local authorities that pay an SRA for licensing was £5,263.36 p/a.
86. The Panel were content that the existing multiplier rate should continue alongside the recommended Basic Allowance rate.

RECOMMENDATION

- 12. That the SRA for the role of Chairman of Licensing Sub Committee be set at £7,045.71 per year which is a continuation of the 0.75 x of the recommended Basic Allowance.**

Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee

87. The Panel considered the evidence and scoring in respect of the Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee. The Panel noted that in addition to acting as Chairman to the Committee, the role would also include acting as the Council's Member Representative for the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) who are the internal audit function for the council.

88. The Panel concluded that the Audit and Governance Committee was a key part of the Council's governance structure as it provided independent assurance.
89. The Panel agreed that the remuneration for SRA for this role should be 0.75 x of the recommended Basic Allowance. The Panel acknowledges that this is an increase in the current SRA of £1,028.98 per annum. The recommended SRA does also acknowledge the additional time commitment and responsibility that have recently been introduced to this committee, noting the now monthly frequency of meetings.

RECOMMENDATION

- 13. That the SRA for the role of Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee be set at £7,045.713 per year which is a 0.75 x the recommended Basic Allowance.**

Adoption Panel Representative

90. The Panel received a request to consider an SRA for the council's representative on the Adoption Panel. This is a role listed in the legislation as a potentially eligible role, but has not previously been recommended by the panel for an allowance because the duties have been carried out by a Cabinet Member or Cabinet Support Member for Young People and Children's Wellbeing. It was noted that in line with statutory requirements, the representative did not however have to be a member of the Executive (Cabinet).
91. Benchmarking data on similar roles in other local authorities was limited, however, Bathnes and Cheshire West do have SRAs attached with adoption and fostering panels. Their SRAs are set at £3,817 and £3,857, respectively, per annum.
92. The Panel considered the time commitment and substantial amount of reading involved with this role. The Panel also noted that it was a council priority that all children and young people in this county to have a great start in life and be healthy, safe and inspired to be the best they can be and ensuring that vulnerable children and young people are placed in a good adopted family environment is a top priority.
93. The panel also noted the significant court judgements that will have significant and far reaching impacts on the way children's services are run at the council. As such, the panel noted its readiness to review this SRA further, should there be a need to do so in light of any constitutional or improvement plan recommended changes.

RECOMMENDATION

- That the SRA for the role of the council's Member representative on the Adoption Panel be set at £7,045.71 per year which is a 0.75 x the recommended Basic Allowance.**

Cabinet Support and Cabinet Opposition Support Member

94. The Panel considered the SRA for the Cabinet Support and cabinet Opposition Member and noted that Cabinet Support Members were only in existence in one other comparator

authority. Given the lack of comparator information, the Panel concluded that the current method of calculating the allowance should continue.

95. The Panel agreed that the SRA for Cabinet Support and Opposition Support Members should remain unchanged and be an allowance of up to 50% of the band 2 allowance (cabinet member allowance) subject to the total budget currently allocated for individual cabinet members not being exceeded.

RECOMMENDATION

- 14. That the SRA for the role of the Cabinet Support and Cabinet Opposition Support Members remain an allowance of up to 50% of the band 2 allowance (cabinet member allowance) subject to the total budget currently allocated for individual cabinet members not being exceeded.**

Group Leaders

96. The Panel Members were advised that the Group Leaders currently receive an SRA of £1,747 (and £124 per group member).
97. The Panel were keen to gain an understanding of the nature of the role and received information about this from the Group Leaders. Persuasive evidence was presented that the role of the group leader was a demanding one, regardless of the number of members within the group. Further, that all group leaders carry the same responsibilities, again, regardless of the size of the group.
98. The Panel noted that the role was a political appointment. Following detailed discussions the Panel concluded that the current SRA should remain unchanged. However, the panel did conclude that the 10% (or five members or more) of the total council membership currently in place for group leaders being eligible for this SRA was not a threshold that had a clear rationale. In this regard, the panel were more compelled by the evidence around the duties and roles the group leaders fulfil.
99. A “political group” under reg 8 of the [Local Government \(Committees and Political Groups\) Regulations 1990/1553](#) comprises two or more members who give written notice of their wish to be treated as a group. It must have a leader and may have another person authorised to act in the place of the leader (“the representative”). A member is to be treated as a member of a group if he is party to such a notice, or otherwise gives notice, signed by the leader, or representative or a majority of group members, that he wishes to join the group. No person can be a member of more than one group.

RECOMMENDATION

- 15. That the SRA for the role of Group Leader remain unchanged at £1,747 (plus £124 per group member) and a group is redefined as being 3 members or more.**

Task and Finish Group and Standing Panel Chairs

100. The Panel considered the Task and Finish Group and Standing Panel Chairs and noted the developing context and importance these groups are likely play in the council's future policy and decision making considerations. It was noted that task and finish groups were set up by the relevant Scrutiny Committees and were asked to look at specific issues and report back. Standing Panels would have a longer term role to provide ongoing advice and research in to longer term council priorities, such as climate change and economic recovery plans.
101. The panel also noted the lack of incentives that current members have in taking on such a responsibility, including carrying the risk and accountability the role entails. This is not to suggest that members are incentivised by financial motives to stand as a task and finish group or standing panel chairperson. But to recognise the risk that members take on in undertaking these roles.
102. Further, that based on the information provided, it was noted that the task and finish groups had an identified Chairman and could last for a variable amount of time depending on the issues being looked into. While the preferred option is that T+F groups will look to consider matters over, say a three week period, and then report back to their parent scrutiny committee. Some task and finish groups and most standing panels would require longer timeframes and greater degrees of complexity to manage.
103. The Panel concluded that there is increasing importance being placed on task and finish groups and standing panels. However, that until a clearer picture emerges about possible changes to scrutiny functions and effectiveness, as part of the rethinking governance work, no SRA should be applied at the current time.

RECOMMENDATION

- 16. That at the current time, no changes are made to the remuneration of Chairpersons of Task and Finish Groups and Standing Panels.**

104. Vice-Chairman of Committees

105. The Panel considered SRA's for the Vice-Chairman of Committees. It was noted that currently only the Vice-Chairman of Council and Vice-Chairman of Scrutiny Committees received no SRA.
106. The Panel discussed the role of Vice-Chairpersons. The panel noted that there had been little in the way of new or compelling evidence to suggest that the current arrangements needed any change. On this basis, the Panel agreed that there should continue to be no SRA for Vice-Chairpersons of the Council or any Committees.

RECOMMENDATION

- 17. That there continue to be no SRA for Vice-Chairpersons of Committees**

Other Roles

107. The Panel was advised and noted that there were other roles that could be considered for an SRA and for the reasons detailed below, felt that it was appropriate not to recommend an SRA for them:

Member Champions	These are appointed by the Leader of the Council and are supported by officers of the council. Further, that member champions are eligible to claim travel and subsistence to ensure that all reasonable costs in undertaking their activities are covered.
Chairman of Health and Wellbeing	It was noted that there was a statutory requirement for specified members of the Executive (Cabinet) to be on this board. The role was within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing. Therefore, no consideration was given to an SRA.
Chairman of SACRE	It was noted that the Committee had the power to elect their own Chairman which meant that the role could be filled by a representative outside of the Council. On this basis no consideration was given to an SRA.
West Mercia Police and Crime Panel	It was noted that the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel consisted of representatives from four councils. On this basis, the Panel felt that it had no power to recommend an SRA.
LEP Board representative	According to the LEP constitution, the Council representative has to be a member of the Executive (Cabinet). This currently is contained in the portfolio of the Leader of the Council. On this basis the Panel did not consider this role.
West Mercia Energy representative	According to the terms of reference for this joint committee, the Council representative has to be a member the Executive (Cabinet). This is contained in the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure. On this basis the Panel did not consider this role.
Fostering Panel Representative	It was noted that it was implicit within the Fostering regulations that an elected member needs to sit on the panel. The representative was currently the Cabinet Support Member for Young People and Children's Wellbeing. On this basis the Panel did not consider this role.
Deputy Leader	The panel did not rate the post. However, if a request is made to rate this SRA separately to the Cabinet Member SRA,

	then the Panel would be happy to convene to consider.
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SRA's per Member

108. The Regulations do not limit the number of SRAs which may be paid, nor do they prohibit the payment of more than one SRA to any one Member. The current scheme prohibits Members from more than one SRA (with the exception of the Group Leaders' SRA) with the highest SRA being the one received. The Panel concluded that there was no reason to review this aspect of the scheme and agreed that the current position be maintained.

RECOMMENDATION

- 18. That the current scheme in relation to payment of no more than one SRA (with the exception of the Group Leaders' SRA) remain unchanged.**

Childcare and Dependants' Carers' Scheme

109. The Panel considered the Childcare and Dependants' Carers' scheme and noted that no Members had made a claim under this Allowance in the last year. As the allowance was payable at current market hourly rates, the Panel concluded that the Scheme should remain unchanged.

RECOMMENDATION

- 19. That there is no change to the Childcare and Dependants' Carers' Scheme.**

Travelling and Subsistence Allowance

110. The Panel considered the Travelling and Subsistence Allowance.
111. The Panel concluded that as the mileage was claimable at the prevailing rates set by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), that the allowance should remain unchanged. It also concluded that as the allowance for subsistence was based on actual reasonable expenses, that the allowance should remain unchanged
112. The Panel was also asked whether alternative measures could be considered to the issuing of car parking passes to all members, with a view to incentivising greener travel options. The Panel were very supportive of this proposal and recognised the clear shift the council is making toward carbon neutrality and addressing the climate change emergency. It was clear from the members survey that a number of members were also supportive of this proposal.
113. However, the Panel also noted that for many councillors public/greener transport options are very limited with car use often being the only option for reliable travel to and from council business. Especially so for evening meetings.
114. To remove the parking pass for all would create inequity, particularly for the more rural ward members. Further, the Panel were concerned that it would not generate any greater

incentive to move to greener transport options. Councillors would still be eligible to claim for their parking while on council business via their expenses. The Panel noted that members, who are able to use greener transport options, can also look to claim for their journeys. Councillors also have the option to voluntarily sacrifice their car parking passes if they are so minded to do.

115. This remains an area of interest to the Panel. With an anticipated return to remote working in the long term, it is likely that the reduction to the carbon footprint seen over the last year as a result of Covid 19 is set to resume in the near future. The reliance on travel to physical meetings is likely to reduce.
116. Turning to the current overnight accommodation allowance, the Panel considered whether the current £120 per night rate was still reasonable. This figure has remained unchanged for at least 5 years in which time hotel accommodation rates have increased. The Panel therefore considered that the current rate of £120 be increased to £150 to take account of inflationary price rises.

RECOMMENDATION

- 20. That the allowance for mileage claimed based on the prevailing HMRC rates remain unchanged.**
- 21. That the allowance for subsistence for meetings held out of the county based on actual reasonable costs remain unchanged**
- 22. That the allowance for overnight accommodation be increased from £120 per night to £150 per night.**

117. Members' Claims

118. The Panel were advised that member's claims are required to be submitted within 12 months of the period to which they relate. However, Democratic services advocate that claims are made within three months of the period to which they relate on the basis that Democratic services now publish quarterly all members expenses claimed on the council's public website.

Technical Requirements

119. The Panel recommends that any further technical or administrative amendments to the Scheme arising out of the regulatory duties and obligations or which are necessary to give administrative effect to the Panel's recommendations are delegated by council to the Monitoring Officer.