

A Review of

Members' Allowances for

Southend-on-Sea City Council

A Report by the

Independent Remuneration Panel

Mr N. Gayner BEM JP
Dr D. Hall (Chair)
Mr W. Robb

August 2023

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For

Southend-on-Sea City Council

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Introduction: The Regulatory Context

1. This report is a synopsis of the proceedings and recommendations made by the statutory Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) appointed by Southend-on-Sea City Council to provide advice to the Council on its current Members' Allowances scheme.
2. The IRP was convened under *The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021)* (the 2003 Regulations). These regulations, which arise out of the relevant provisions in the *Local Government Act 2000*, require all local authorities to maintain an independent remuneration panel (also known as an IRP or Panel) to review and provide advice to Councils on Members' allowances. This is in the context whereby elected Members are able to determine their own levels of remuneration, and much of the scope and levels of other allowances/reimbursements payable under the 2003 Regulations.
3. All Councils are required to convene their IRP and seek its advice before they make any changes or amendments to their members' allowances scheme and they must 'pay regard' to the Panel's recommendations before setting a new or amended members' allowances scheme.
4. In particular, the Panel has been reconvened under the *2003 Regulations [10. (50)]*, which states:

Where an authority has regard to an index for the purpose of annual adjustment of allowances it must not rely on that index for longer than a period of four years before seeking a further recommendation from the independent remuneration panel established in respect of that authority on the application of an index to its scheme.
5. This mechanism is utilised to oblige all Councils to reconvene their IRP, usually at least once every four years, as a means of ensuring a degree of public accountability vis-à-vis their members' allowances schemes. It is under this

requirement that the IRP has undertaken this review of members' allowances for Southend-on-Sea City Council.

The IRP

6. Southend-on-Sea City Council reconvened its IRP consisting of the following members:

- Mr N. Gayner BEM JP A retired Magistrate and Bank Manager, accountant, trustee and treasurer of three local charities
- Dr Declan Hall (Chair) A former lecturer at the Institute of Local Government, The University of Birmingham and currently an independent consultant specialising in Members' Allowances reviews
- Mr W. Robb A retired senior civil servant with responsibility for the local VAT Offices in the County

7. The Review was supported and serviced throughout by the following Officer:

- Colin Gamble Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Southend-on-Sea City Council

Terms of Reference

8. In accordance with the 2003 Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations (21.1) and the 2006 Statutory Guidance on Regulation for Local Authority Allowances (61) the IRP was asked to produce a report to make recommendations on the following:

- (a) The amount of Basic Allowance that should be payable to elected Members and the expenses it should include
- (b) The responsibilities or duties which should lead to the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance and as to the amount of such an allowance
- (c) Those Co-optees who should receive a Co-optees' Allowance and as to the amount of such an allowance
- (d) The duties for which a travelling and subsistence allowance can be paid and as to the amount of this allowance
- (e) As to whether Dependents' Carers' Allowance should be payable to Members, and as to the amount of such an allowance
- (f) As to whether adjustments to the level of allowances may be determined according to an index and if so which index and how long that index should apply, subject to a maximum of four years, before its application is reviewed;
- (g) The implementation date for the new Scheme of Members' allowances.

9. In addition, the IRP was asked to make recommendations on:
- (h) The Civic Allowances and amounts payable
 - (i) Any other issues that are brought to the IRPs attention

The IRPs Approach and Evidence Reviewed

10. The IRP met at the Southend-on-Sea City Council Civic Centre on the 20th and 21st June 2023 to hear and consider oral and written evidence from Members. To ensure that no Member was denied a voice in the review process the IRP invited all the Group Leaders (or their nominees) to meet with the IRP plus other Members who requested to meet with the IRP. In addition, all Members of the Council were also invited to make written submissions, of which 11 were received. Relevant Officers were also invited to meet with the IRP to provide factual briefings on any constitutional and governance changes since the last review in 2019.
11. The IRP also reviewed further written information pertinent to the review, such as the current allowances scheme from the Council, previous IRP report, committee terms of reference, meetings schedules, benchmarking data, statutory guidance, etc.
12. For details of whom the IRP met and full range of information reviewed see:
- [Appendix 1](#) for a list of the full range of evidence considered by the IRP
 - [Appendix 2](#) for Members and Officers who met with the IRP
 - [Appendix 3](#) Summary of benchmarking data considered by IRP

Principles and Observations

Reducing Barriers and Providing Recompense

13. The IRP continues to be guided by the overarching principle that underpinned its previous (joint) reviews; namely, that it should seek to minimise barriers to public service to enable a wide a range of people to become a Councillor without incurring undue personal financial cost. Consequently, the allowances should provide a degree of recompense for time spent and responsibility carried by Members.
14. On the other hand, the IRP recognises that an element of Members' input should be voluntary, given freely as a public service so that Members do not stand for and remain on the council primarily for financial reasons.

Transparency

15. The IRP has always tried to ensure that the allowances scheme should be transparent so to understand how and why the allowances are being paid and for

the scheme to be simple to operate. This transparency principle has led the IRP to take a consistent approach in how it has arrived at its recommendations so as both elected Members and the public understand the logic of the allowances payable.

Scheme Still Fit for Purpose and Recognising Current Economic Context

16. While there was some evidence indicating that some of the allowances might merit a meaningful revision such evidence was by no means substantial. Overall, the evidence received by the IRP confirmed that the current scheme was still broadly fit for purpose. Moreover, the weight of the representations received by the IRP indicated that substantial increases in allowances could not be justified. Likewise, as the means by which the Councils are publically held to account vis-à-vis their allowances the IRP has to be cognisant of the broader economic context. This has had a bearing on the IRPs recommendations.
17. Consequently, the role of the IRP during this review has been to address any anomalies arising due to legislative and structural changes over the last four years. The IRP has sought to correct any incongruities that are apparent rather than undertake a comprehensive resetting of the whole allowances scheme. Where the IRP has made revisions it is in response to representations received and where such a revision can be backed up by the wider evidence.

The IRPs Recommendations - The Basic Allowance

Recalibrating the Basic Allowance

18. The IRP, in line with the 2003 Statutory Guidance (paragraphs 67-69) revisited the original variables utilised in arriving at the Basic Allowance but updated those variables for the most recent values available.
19. The 3 variables and their respective values utilised by the IRP in recalibrating the Basic Allowance are as follows:
 - **Input:** 130 days per year
 - **Public Service Discount:** 33%
 - **Rate of Remuneration:** £120 per day
20. The expected minimum annual input of 130 days is an historical assessment, based on 20 hours per week. The IRP noted that the 2022 LGC Census of Councillors shows that Members of English unitary councils with no position of responsibility put in on average 22.8 hours per week, which equates to 148.2 days per year on an eight hour day. The IRP was not guided by the LGA reported average for two reasons:
 - I. The average figure includes those Members who put in more than is necessary to be an effective Member as they have a greater capacity than what is required
 - II. In interviews the most commonly reported time requirement to be an effective backbench Member was in the 16-20 hour per week range

21. Thus for the purposes of recalibrating the Basic Allowance the IRP has maintained the figure of 20 hours per week or 130 days per year as a reasonable estimation for the time required to fulfil the roles associated with the Basic Allowance.
22. The 2006 Statutory Guidance also requires that the Basic Allowance recognises the public service principle. The Public Service Discount (PSD) is the element of a Members' time that is not remunerated and is given freely as public service or *pro bono publico*. The size of the PSD historically utilised by this IRP and most commonly used by other IRPs is one third, often conceptualised as the element of a Councillors time that is spent dealing with constituent, ward and community issues. Thus, out of the 130 days per year expected input for Members 43.3 days have been assumed to be unremunerated, leaving 86.7 remunerated days.
23. The updated rate of remuneration is based on the 2022 median daily pay (gross) for all full time employee jobs in the Southend City Council area, as set out in the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), Table 7.1a. This table gives a median figure of £600.80 per week which the IRP divided by five working days to give a daily figure of £120.16. Such a locally based rate of remuneration is typically utilised by IRPs in recommending a Basic Allowance as it links the Basic Allowance to the median earnings of local residents and therefore has a logic that is reasonable and robust.
24. The recalibrated Basic Allowance has been arrived at by applying the following formula as laid out in the 2006 Statutory Guidance:
 - 130 days minimum annual expected average input – 43.3 days per year as the Public Service Discount
= 86.7 remunerated days per year
 - 86.7 days per year x £120.16 per day
= **£10,418**
25. By going through this process of recalibrating the Basic Allowance with an updated rate of remuneration (£10,418) it does show that indexation has not kept the current Southend Basic Allowance (£9,963) in line with the approach as set out in the 2006 Statutory Guidance.

Benchmarking the current Basic Allowance

26. As a further test, the IRP benchmarked the current Southend Basic Allowance (£9,963) against that paid in the comparator councils utilised for the Southend benchmarking group. The benchmarking, or comparator, group consisted of 13 authorities based on a mixture of Southend-on-Sea City Council's Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Near Neighbour Councils and other primarily Southern coastal unitary councils plus Southend (see appendix 3 for further details) This exercise was carried out as a further checking mechanism to ascertain whether or not the Basic Allowance in Southend was in line with that paid to peers.

27. Benchmarking against this group of councils shows the following
- Average Basic Allowance: £11,651
 - Median Basic Allowance: £11,462
28. Benchmarking provides an even stronger indication that the current Southend Basic Allowance (£9,963) is low as it is noticeably below that paid peer councils.

The Representation received from Members

29. In the representation received from Members the strongest view expressed was that the current Basic Allowance was now on the low side. While by no means overwhelming the majority view was the Basic Allowance did not fulfil the function that it was intended to do, namely enable most people to be an elected Member without suffering undue financial penalties, particularly for anyone who is in employment who would have to take time off work to fulfil their Councillor duties. The current Basic Allowance it was argued would not fully compensate persons in such a position. Moreover, in recent years there have been increased demands placed on Members, particularly with the advent of social media which means they are contactable at all hours by constituents and other relevant interested parties.
30. At the same time this view was also somewhat tempered by the view that any increase in the Basic Allowance needed to be reasonable. As such the IRP has concluded that there is a case to increase the Basic Allowance but bearing in mind the representation received the IRP has opted to be guided by the recalibrated Basic Allowance (£10,418) which the IRP has further rounded down to the nearest £100, which equates to £10,400. The IRP recognises that this uplift does not put it on a par with the benchmarked mean and median Basic Allowance but as previously mentioned the IRP was cognisant of the economic context and this recommended level of Basic Allowance narrows the gap with peers.
31. **Consequently, the IRP recommends that Basic Allowance payable by Southend-on-Sea City Council is reset at £10,400 for 2023/24, subject to any indexation that may be applicable.**

Expenses deemed to be included in the recommended Basic Allowance

32. Currently the Basic Allowance is deemed to cover the following costs
- In-City travel and subsistence
 - Reasonable use of a Member's household broadband
 - Postage, stationery and minor items of office equipment (but not printing cartridges and paper)
33. The IRP was informed that all Members get a laptop/Surface Pro and the Council has now gone paperless. As such, it is only consistent that if a Member wishes to print out any Council papers then it is their own personal choice and the Council should no longer be covering the cost of paper and ink cartridges.

34. Consequently, **the IRP recommends that the recommended Basic Allowance (£10,400) continues to cover the following costs:**
- **In-City travel and subsistence**
 - **Reasonable use of a Member’s household broadband**
 - **Postage, stationery and minor items of office equipment**
35. In addition, **in the future the recommended Basic Allowance (£10,400) should also be deemed to cover the following costs:**
- **Printer ink cartridges**
 - **Printing Paper**

Recommended Special Responsibility Allowances – Maintaining current ratios

36. The IRP is recommending some SRAs are revised, some are added to the schedule and in one case discontinued (see below) the IRP received no evidence that the majority of SRAs merited revision. The following SRAs set out in Table 1 below are those that the IRP has recommended to be maintained. Moreover, the IRP has historically arrived at SRAs by a methodology set out in the 2006 Statutory Guidance (paragraph 76) which states:

One way of calculating special responsibility allowances may be to take the agreed level of basic allowance and recommend a multiple of this allowance as an appropriate special responsibility allowance

37. For the SRAs set out in Table 1 below the IRP has maintained their current ratios, as a multiple of the recommended Basic Allowance (£10,400) as follows

Table 1 – Recommended SRAs with no change in methodology

Recommended SRAs – No Change in multiple X BA		
Basic Allowance	£10,400	
SRAs	BA X %age	Recommended SRA
Leader	350%	£36,400
Deputy Leader	180%	£18,720
Leader of Largest Opposition Group	100%	£10,400
Deputy Leader of Largest Opposition Group – where Group has at least 13 Members	25%	£2,600
Leader Other Opposition Groups – where Group has at least four Members	25%	£2,600
Chairs of Scrutiny (3)	75%	£7,800
Vice Chairs of Scrutiny (3)	5%	£520

Chair of Licensing (and a Licensing Sub-Committee A or B)	60%	£6,240
Vice Chair of Licensing (and a Licensing Sub-Committee A or B)	55%	£5,720
Chair of Development Control	100%	£10,400
Vice Chair of Development Control	25%	£2,600
Chair of Audit	25%	£2,600
Chairs of Appeals (A and B)	25%	£2,600

Notes on SRAs in Table 1 – Deputy Leader of the Largest Opposition Group

38. Currently the Deputy Leader of the largest Opposition Group only receives an SRA when the largest Opposition Group has reached a qualifying threshold of 17 Members, or one third of the Council membership. This type of qualifying threshold is not uncommon. However, the IRP noted that compared to elsewhere this threshold was relatively high. Consequently the IRP concluded it would be more equitable to lower the qualifying threshold for the SRA for the Deputy Leader of the largest Opposition Group to be payable. In resetting the threshold the IRP concluded that having 25 per cent of the Council membership was more in line with typical practice, which it has equated to 13 Members.
39. **The IRP recommends that the qualifying threshold for the recommended SRA (£2,600) for the Leader of the largest Opposition Group to be payable is reset at 13 Group Members.**

Vice Chairs of Scrutiny

40. The IRP did receive some representation that the Vice Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees did not merit an SRA on the grounds that there was limited evidence that they met the test of having “significant responsibility” as set out in the 2006 Statutory Guidance (paragraph 73). In contrast, the Vice Chair of Licensing has a significant role in chairing the Licensing Sub-Committees and the Vice Chair of Development Control will have to step in when for instance the Chair has a conflict of interest and is required to have specialist knowledge. The Development Control Vice Chair will also attend briefings as routine and take part in site visits. The Vice Chairs of Scrutiny do not have any assigned discrete responsibilities.
41. However, the IRP was informed that the Vice Chairs of Scrutiny do attend committee pre-meetings with the Chair and relevant Officer. In addition, the Scrutiny Forum has been re-established, which meets quarterly and consists of all Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs to co-ordinate and plan work programmes. As such **the IRP was not convinced that the SRAs for the Vice Chair of Scrutiny should be discontinued and is recommending that it remains, paid at five per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance.**

Setting a fixed sum for other Cabinet Members SRAs

42. Another suggestion put to the IRP was that a fixed sum of money should be established to pay SRAs to the other Cabinet Members. The result of this approach it was argued was that if the number of other Cabinet Members was increased then they would each receive a lesser SRA, for example if the fixed pot was divided across seven other Cabinet Members and then an additional Cabinet Member was appointed then they would each get a lower SRA as the fixed pot would be divided by eight rather than seven.
43. Again the IRP was not convinced by this argument. There is a legal maximum of 10 Cabinet Members (including Leader and Deputy Leader) so there is a cap on the number of other Cabinet Members that can be paid an SRA. The IRP also noted that this approach is rarely adopted elsewhere. Moreover, there is potential for manipulation; the number of other Cabinet Members could be decreased simply to boost their SRA. In addition, it could in theory if the number of other Cabinet was significantly decreased lead to a situation whereby they would be unjustifiably high. The IRP takes the view that there is a rate for the job for being an other Cabinet Member and it is the prerogative of the Leader of the Council to settle on how many other Cabinet Members there should be.
44. **The IRP is not recommending that a fixed pot should be set to be paid for SRAs to other Cabinet Members that decreases and increases depending on the number of other Cabinet Members appointed.**

Recommended Special Responsibility Allowances – Revising SRAs for other Cabinet Members

45. Although in the main the IRP is not recommending a change in the current methodology utilised to arrive at SRAs it has done so for one category, namely the other Cabinet Members, of which there are currently eight in number.
46. Currently, the other Cabinet Members are paid an SRA set at 125 per cent of the Basic Allowance. This has always been somewhat less than that paid to Cabinet Members in benchmarked councils. However, historically the IRP has been content with this situation because unlike in most other Councils Cabinet Members in Southend have no individual decision making powers.
47. However, during the course of the review, since the Council meeting of 13th July 2023, the Council altered this situation. In order to achieve more efficient and democratic practices the Constitution has been changed to remove the restriction on Cabinet Members being able to exercise individual decision making powers (to reflect the statutory position enabling Cabinet Members to take individual decisions). The IRP concluded that this is a material increase in the responsibility of other Cabinet Members that should be reflected in their recommended SRA. In arriving at an appropriate SRA the IRP has been guided by median SRA (£14,453) rather than the mean SRA (£15,464) paid to other Cabinet Members in the benchmarking group. As such, the IRP has reset the SRA for other Cabinet Members at 140 per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance (£10,400), which equates to £14,560.

48. **The IRP recommends that the SRA paid to other Cabinet Members is reset at 140 per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance (£10,400) and is paid at £14,560.**

SRAs to be discontinued - Vice Chairs of Appeals Committees A and B

49. Currently, the Vice Chairs of the Appeals Committees A and B are paid an SRA set at five per cent of the Basic Allowance. There was some representation received querying the merit of this SRA. In this case, the IRP agreed that there was not a strong case to remunerate the Vice Chairs of the Southend Council Appeals Committees A and B. Unlike Scrutiny Vice Chairs they do not attend pre-meetings nor engage in planning their programme of work.
50. **Consequently, the IRP recommends that the SRA paid to the Vice Chairs of the Appeals Committees A and B be discontinued.**

Additional SRA recommended – Chair of General Purposes

51. In response to the representation received the IRP considered the case to recommend an SRA for the Chair of the General Purposes Committee. Historically this committee has met on an irregular basis and in some years only having two scheduled meetings per year. However, recently as a result of a peer review it has met more frequently. Moreover, going forward, the IRP was informed that the General Purposes Committee will be considering a constitutional review that will require more scheduled meetings plus there is a boundary review on the horizon over the next two-three years which will result in a greater workload for this committee.
52. The IRP was satisfied that over the next few years the workload of the General Purposes Committee will be sufficient so that the Chair merits an SRA. In arriving at the appropriate SRA the IRP considered that the role of Chair for the next few years at least will be greater than that of the Chair of Audit (set at 25 per cent of the Basic Allowance) but not as great as the Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee (and Licensing Sub-Committee A or B – which has been set at 55 per cent of the Basic Allowance). As such, the IRP concluded that an appropriate ratio was 35 per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance, which equates to £3,640. The IRP will revisit this recommendation at the time of the next review to assess whether the workload of the Chair of the General Purposes Committee remains at the current and projected level.
53. **The IRP recommends that the Chair of the General Purposes Committee is paid an SRA set at 35 per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance (£10,400), which equates to £3,640.**

Additional SRAs recommended - Members of the Adoption (x1) and Fostering Panels (x2)

54. Again representation was received asking the IRP to consider recommending an SRA paid to the Members appointed to Adoption Panel (x1) and Fostering Panel (x2). The IRP noted that these posts are on occasion remunerated elsewhere, although it is by no means typical. Nonetheless the IRP considered that the Members appointed to the Adoption and Fostering Panels did have duties to undertake above and beyond that expected of most ordinary backbench Members and as such an SRA was merited. The IRP has set the recommended SRA for the members of the Adoption and Fostering Panels at five per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance (£10,400) which equates to £520.
55. **The IRP recommends that the Members appointed to the Adoption Panel and the Fostering Panel are each paid an SRA set at five per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance (£10,400), which equates to £520.**

SRAs considered but not recommended – Chair of the Standards Committee

56. The IRP received some representation, albeit limited, that the Chair of the Standards Committee merited an SRA on the grounds that there was a lot of complaints against Members. Indeed there are a lot of complaints against Members at Southend-on-Sea City Council. However, the Standards Committee is no longer a statutory committee and since the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Localism Act 2011 its remit and powers have been much reduced. The majority of complaints are addressed before they reach the Standards Committee by the Monitoring Officer, typically in consultation with the statutory post of an Independent Person, as was the intent of the Localism Act.
57. Therefore, **the IRP is It is not recommending that the Chair of the Standards Committee is paid an SRA.**

The Vice Chair of the General Purposes Committee

58. As the IRP has recommended that the Chair of the General Purposes Committee receives an SRA, it considered the case to pay an SRA to the Vice Chair of the General Purposes Committee. The IRP received no evidence or representation that the Vice Chair of the General Purposes Committee merited an SRA.
59. Therefore, **the IRP is It is not recommending that the Vice Chair of the General Purposes Committee is paid an SRA**

Members appointed to South Essex Homes

60. The IRP received a representation that Council appointees to South Essex Homes merited an SRA as it is a role beyond and above that of the ordinary backbench Member and is the equivalent of a non-executive director role. South Essex Homes is an Arm's Length Management Company that delivers and maintains what was previously the City's council housing. The Board is made up mostly of Council Members and South Essex Homes tenant appointees with an independent Chair.

61. The IRP accepts that the role may well be beyond and above that of the ordinary backbench Member. However, as a limited company the South Essex Homes organisation has the ability to decide whether or not to remunerate its Board Members. The IRP considered this issue to be outside its remit.
62. **The IRP is not making any recommendation regarding the payment of SRAs to Council Members appointed to South Essex Homes.**

Confirming the “1-SRA only” Rule

63. In line with good practice **the IRP recommends that the allowances scheme continues to prohibit the receipt of more than 1 SRA regardless of the number of remunerated posts a Member may hold.**

The Civic Allowances – Mayor and Deputy Mayor

64. The IRP was asked to consider the civic allowance paid to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. This allowance is outwith the remit of the 2003 Regulations and therefore the IRP. However, IRPs are frequently asked to make recommendations on their Council’s civic allowances in the absence of any other form of external validation as they are set by the Council itself.
65. The IRP notes that the 2006 Statutory Guidance (paragraph 90) states:
- A principal council may pay the chair and vice chair an allowance which it thinks reasonable for the purpose of meeting the expenses of those offices (s3(5), and s5(4), of the Local Government Act 1972). This is often known as 'civic dignitaries' allowance'
66. In other words this allowance is not intended to be remuneration per se but to meet the costs of holding the office of Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Southend-on-Sea City Council. Currently the Mayor receives a civic allowance set at 150 per cent of the Basic Allowance while the Deputy Mayor receives a civic allowance set at 35 per cent of the Basic Allowance. It is noted that the Mayor is also provided with a car and driver to travel to official functions which alleviates the cost of holding office and is unusual in this day and age.
67. Noting the purpose of the civic allowance the question for the IRP was do the current civic allowances payable leave the Mayor and Deputy Mayor out of pocket by holding their offices? The IRP received no evidence that is the case, particularly considering the Mayor is still provided with a car and driver to attend official functions. As such, the IRP is recommending that the current methodology to arrive at the Civic Allowance for the Mayor (150 per cent times the recommended Basic Allowance) and Deputy Mayor (35 per cent times the recommended Basic Allowance) is maintained, which equates to £15,615 and £3,644 respectively.
68. **The IRP recommends that the Civic Allowances for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are maintained at 150 and 35 per cent of the recommended Basic**

- **Specialist care allowance:** maximum rate claimable set at hourly rate charged by Southend-on-Sea City Council Social Services Department for a Home Care Assistant

Travel and Subsistence Allowances – within the Council area

76. Currently the allowances scheme does not enable Members to claim Travel and Subsistence Allowances for attending approved duties within the Council area. The IRP received no evidence to alter this situation.
77. **The IRP recommends that the current provision in the Members' Allowances scheme that prohibits Members claiming Travel and Subsistence Allowances for attending approved duties within the Council area is maintained.**

Subsistence Allowances – outwith the Council area

78. While no particular issues were raised regarding the Subsistence Allowances claimable for attending approved duties outwith the Council area the IRP noted that they were slightly on the low side. As such, they should be rebased on the same rates that are applicable to Officers.
79. **The IRP recommends that the Subsistence Allowances should be revised and based on the same Subsistence rates that apply to Officers. The IRP is not recommending any change to the current overnight rates.**

Travel Allowances – outwith the Council area

80. Currently the mileage rates claimable for attending approved duties outwith the Council area reflect HMRC approved mileage rates, except in one respect – they do not include provision for when a Member carries passengers to the same approved duties. HMRC approved mileage rates provide for a Passenger Supplement Rate at 5p per mile per passenger up to a maximum of four passengers. The IRP regarded this as an omission that if included in the allowances scheme could potentially result in some minor savings to the Council.
81. The IRP recommends that the current range of HMRC mileage rates are maintained for when a Member attends an approved duty outwith the Council area with the addition of the following provision:
- **Passenger Supplement Rate:** payable at 5p per mile per passenger up to a maximum of four passengers

Travel – Issues arising – the Council parking pass

82. Currently, the allowances scheme (page 5) Other Terms and Conditions paragraph 2 – Other Facilities states that Members are offered a free car park pass for use in

any Council “Pay and Display” controlled parking zone, provided it is used solely in connection with undertaking official duties on behalf of the Council. The IRP noted that there has been a change in Council policy in this regard, in that the free Council car park pass can now only be used at the Civic Centre Underground and three other car parks (Civic Centre East, Beecroft Lower and University Square) by a Member when undertaking official duties on behalf of the Council. The scheme should be amended to reflect this reality.

83. **The IRP recommends that the allowances scheme (page 5) Other Terms and Conditions paragraph 2 – Other Facilities is amended to read that:**

Members may receive a free car park pass only to be used at four car parks (Civic Centre Underground, Civic Centre East, Beecroft Lower and University Square) when undertaking official duties on behalf of the Council.

Indexation

84. Historically the IRP has always recommended that the allowances are updated in accordance with a relevant index. The IRP received no evidence to alter this position.
85. **Therefore, the IRP recommends that the following indices are applied to the remuneration and allowances paid to Members of the Council:**
- a. **Basic Allowance, SRAs, Co-optees & IP Allowances:**
 - Indexed to the annual percentage salary increase for local government staff (*at spinal column 43*) to be implemented from the start of the municipal year, rather than financial year, for which year it is applicable.
 - b. **Mileage Allowance:**
 - Adjusted in line with applicable HMRC rates
 - c. **Subsistence Allowances:**
 - The day subsistence allowances and overnight subsistence allowances should be indexed to the same percentage increase that may be applied by the Council to Officer day and overnight subsistence rates.
 - d. **DCA:**
 - **Basic Sitters Allowance:**
 - Indexed to the national living wage
 - **Specialist care allowance:**
 - Indexed to the hourly rate charged by Southend-on-Sea City Council Social Services Department for a Home Care Assistant

Implementation of Recommendations

86. **The IRP further recommends that Southend-on-Sea City Council implements the recommendations contained in this report from 1 August 2023.**

Appendix One: Information received by the IRP

1. Terms of Reference for IRP
2. Southend-on-Sea City Council 2023/24 Councillors Allowances Scheme
3. Southend-on-Sea & Thurrock Council IRP – Joint Report by the IRP (July 2019)
4. Southend-on-Sea City Council Minutes extract (18th July 2019) recording Council decision on July 2019 Report
5. Southend-on-Sea City Council Members' Allowances & Expenses statutory publication 2021/22
6. Southend-on-Sea City Council meetings schedule of Council, committees, etc., including political make up of Council
 - Including number of licensing hearings past 3-4 years and who chaired them
7. Remit of Council, Cabinet, Committees, etc. Part 3 Schedule 2 of Constitution
8. National Joint Council for Local Government Services, showing Local Government Staff Pay increase for 2022/23 – SCP 43 4.04%
9. Statutory Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances May 2006. (Extract)
10. Relevant benchmarking data/material namely spread sheets summarizing & comparing allowances paid in benchmarking group for the review (based on Other Coastal and CIPFA Near Neighbour Unitary Councils
 - Blackpool
 - Brighton & Hove
 - Bournemouth, Poole & Christchurch
 - Cheshire West & Chester
 - Derby
 - Medway
 - North Somerset
 - Peterborough
 - Plymouth
 - Portsmouth
 - Southampton
 - Thurrock
 - Torbay
11. Hard copies of Members' Allowances Schemes (2023/24) from benchmarking councils
12. National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2022 (LGA), breakdown of weekly hours by councillors by number of positions held and type of council, in email from S. Richards, LGA 17 May 2023

13. Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), Average weekly earnings (gross) all full time employees, Southend-on-Sea City Council, (work geography), Table 7.1a November 2022
14. Copies of Members written submissions/replies to short questionnaire sent to all Members
15. Power point presentation to IRP by Dr Hall (IRP Chair)– reviewing allowances, the Southend-on-Sea model, including benchmarking, issues of concern and options
16. Power point presentation by IRP by Colin Gamble, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services, Southend-on-Sea City Council decision making process
17. Statutory Instruments: 2003 No. 1021 – The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003
18. Colin Gamble (Head of Democratic & Electoral Services), Review of Constitution and Associated Matters, Report to Council 13th July 2023

Appendix Two: Members and Officers who met with the IRP

Members:¹

Cllr T. Cox	Leader of the Council and Conservative Group and Cabinet Member for Special Educational Needs & Disability
Cllr D. Cowan	Leader of Labour Group
Cllr J. Moyies	Cabinet Member for Public Health, Adult Social Care & Constitutional Affairs, Chair of Standards Committee (Conservative)
Cllr C. Mulronev	Vice Chair of Licensing Sub-Committee (C) and Place Scrutiny Committee
Cllr R. Woodley	Leader of Residents First Group, Deputy Mayor and Chair of Scrutiny Place Committee

Officers (Briefings):

Colin Gamble:	Head of Democratic and Electoral Services
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¹ In addition there were 11 written submissions from Members

Appendix Three: Summary of Benchmarking Data

BM1 Southend-on-Sea BM Group - Other Coastal/Near Neighbour Unitaries: BA + Exec + Scrutiny SRAs (23/24)									
Comparator Unitary Council	Basic Allowance	Leader	Leader Total	Deputy Leader	Executive Cabinet Members	Assistant or Deputy Cabinet Members	Chairs Main or Single O&S	Chairs or Lead Scrutiny	V/Chairs Scrutiny
Blackpool*	£10,664	£34,925	£45,589	£19,195	£14,396	£5,332	£14,396	£10,664	£5,332
Brighton & Hove	£13,002	£32,505	£45,507	£19,503	Committee Governance Model			£4,876	
BCP*	£13,543	£22,810	£36,353	£19,559	£19,559	£10,834		£8,125	
Cheshire West & Chester	£14,453	£33,194	£47,647	£24,895	£14,453	£3,000	£9,318	£8,748	
Derby	£12,145	£36,436	£48,581	£27,327	£18,218			£9,109	£2,228
Medway	£10,952	£32,856	£43,808	£21,904	£16,428			£10,952	£3,834
N. Somerset	£10,338	£30,500	£40,838	£21,350	£18,300			£7,625	
Peterborough	£10,663	£31,989	£42,652	£19,193	£15,995	£7,997		£7,997	
Plymouth	£11,969	£35,906	£47,875	£25,264	£23,932	£2,992		£11,969	
Portsmouth	£12,368	£22,262	£34,630	£8,658	£8,658			£3,092	
Southampton	£13,900	£27,800	£41,700	£13,900	£13,900		£6,950	£3,475	
Thurrock	£9,565	£33,583	£43,148	£17,271	£11,994			£7,196	£1,440
Torbay	£9,584	£22,119	£31,703	£12,275	£11,674		£7,913	£3,955	
Southend-on-Sea	£9,963	£34,870	£44,833	£17,868	£12,453			£7,472	£498
Mean	£11,651	£30,840	£42,490	£19,154	£15,464	£6,031	£9,644	£7,518	£2,666
Median	£11,461	£32,681	£43,478	£19,349	£14,453	£5,332	£8,616	£7,811	£2,228
Highest	£14,453	£36,436	£48,581	£27,327	£23,932	£10,834	£14,396	£11,969	£5,332
Lowest	£9,565	£22,119	£31,703	£8,658	£8,658	£2,992	£6,950	£3,092	£498
Mean Ratios X BA		2.65	3.65	1.64	1.33	0.52	0.83	0.65	0.23
Southend Ratios X BA		3.50	4.50	1.79	1.25			0.75	0.05
<i>* Leaders' SRA listed includes where in receipt of other SRAs</i>									

BM2 Southend-on-Sea BM Group Other Coastal/Near Neighbour Unitaries: Regulatory SRAs (23/24)							
Comparator Unitary Council	Chair of Planning	V/Chair of Planning	Chair of Licensing	V/Chair[s] Licensing	Chairs Licensing Panels/Subs	Chair of Audit inc. Corp Governance	Chair Standards
Blackpool	£8,531	£4,266	£8,531	£4,266		£8,531	
Brighton & Hove	£11,377	£975	£11,377	£975		£4,876	
BCP	£10,834		£10,834	£2,709		£10,834	£3,251
Cheshire West & Chester	£9,508		£8,367			£8,177	
Derby*	£9,109	£4,554	£9,109	£18,216		£6,376	
Medway	£13,143	£5,476			£42 p/mtng	£7,667	
N. Somerset	£7,625		£7,625			£4,575	
Peterborough	£9,597		£7,997			£7,997	£3,199
Plymouth	£11,969	£5,984	£11,969	£2,992	£11,969	£11,969	
Portsmouth	£4,329		£4,329			£4,329	
Southampton	£6,950		£6,950		£6,950	£6,950	
Thurrock	£9,595	£2,399	£5,757	£5,757		£2,399	
Torbay	£7,913		£3,955		£1,278	£3,955	
Southend-on-Sea	£9,963	£2,491	£5,978	£5,480		£2,491	
Mean	£9,317	£3,735	£7,906	£5,771		£6,509	
Median	£9,552	£4,266	£7,997	£4,266		£6,663	
Highest	£13,143	£5,984	£11,969	£18,216		£11,969	
Lowest	£4,329	£975	£3,955	£975		£2,399	
Mean Ratios X BA	0.80	0.32	0.68	0.50		0.56	
Southend Ratios X BA	1.00	0.25	0.60	0.55		0.25	

* Derby pays SRA of £4,554 to 4 Vice Chairs of Licensing

BM3 Southend-on-Sea BM Group - Other Coastal/Near Neighbour Unitaries: Opposition, Group & Other SRAs (23/24)						
Comparator Council	Main Opposition Leader	Main Opposition Dep Leader	Other Opposition Group Leaders	Council Mayor or Chair	Deputy Mayor or Chair	Other SRAs
Blackpool	£14,396	£7,198	£7,198	£12,974	£3,244	Chair + V/Chair Appeals £8,531/£4,266, Chair Transport Board £5,228, Chair Audit Transport Board £3,358, Non Execs Transport Board £2,608, Chair + Members Shareholder Committee £4,000/£2,608, Members Fostering Panel £90 p/mtn
Brighton & Hove	£11,377	£6,501	£6,501			Chairs Policy Committees £9,752, Deputy Chairs £4,876/£975, Chair HWB £9,752, Lead Member Adult Care & Health £4,876
BCP	£3,251		£3,251	£10,834	£5,418	Chair Appeals £3,251
Cheshire West & Chester	£9,508	£7,054	£4,356	£6,182		Chairs Staffing + Community Governance + Appeals Committees + Adoption/Fostering Panel representative £6,366, Chair HWB £3,653, Member Champion £1,020, Majority Group Whip + Deputy Whip £6,600/£3,300, Main Opposition Whip + Deputy Whip £4,300/£2,150
Derby	£9,109	£4,554	£9,109	£9,109		Chair Personnel Committee £6,376, Members of Licensing £2,278
Medway	£13,143		£6,572	£13,690	£6,572	Chair HWB £13,143, O&S Spokespersons £6,572, Opposition Spokespersons Planning £5,476, Chair Employment £3,834, Majority Group Whip £1,643, Opposition Group Whip £1,096, Licensing Members £42 p/hearing
N. Somerset	£5,185		£4,575	£9,150		Leaders 3rd & 4th & 5th Opposition Groups £3,660 + £2,745 + £2,135
Peterborough	£4,478		£2,559			Leader 3rd Opposition Group £960, Chairs Employment + Corporate Parenting Committees £3,199
Plymouth	£1,969	£5,984	£5,984	£16,627	£5,487	V/Chair Taxi Licensing £2,992, Chair H&WB Board £5,984
Portsmouth	£7,421		£3,710			Chair Employment £4,329, Minor Opposition Group Leaders £2,474, Shadow Cabinet £1,237
Southampton	£9,122		£3,042			
Thurrock	£9,565	£2,399	£2,399	£14,393	£3,358	Chair Corporate Parenting £2,399
Torbay	£5,760		£768	£3,955		Chair Harbour Committee £3,955
Southend-on-Sea	£9,963	£2,491	£2,491	£14,944	£3,487	Chairs + V/Chairs of Appeals Committees £2,491 + £498
Mean	£8,161	£5,169	£4,465	£11,186	£4,594	
Median	£9,116	£5,984	£4,033	£11,904	£4,453	
Highest	£14,396	£7,198	£9,109	£16,627	£6,572	
Lowest	£1,969	£2,399	£768	£3,955	£3,244	
Mean Ratios X BA	0.7	0.4	0.4	1.0	0.4	
Southend Ratios X BA	1.0	0.3	0.3	1.5	0.3	

