



# **Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Review of the Members' Allowances 2026**

**March 2026**

**Ms Astrid Weekes (Chair), Dr. Louise Smith and Mr. Paul Goldfinch**

## Introduction

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (UK Statutory Instruments 1021) requires all local authorities to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to review and provide advice on Members' allowances on a regular basis. The appointment of the IRP, for a four-year term from June 2024 to May 2028, was agreed at Annual Council on 15/05/2024 and comprises Ms. Astrid Weekes, Dr Louise Smith, and Mr. Paul Goldfinch. This year's review was conducted between 13th January and 27th March 2026.

The IRP's terms of reference, in relation to Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC), are to make recommendations:

- a. In the amount of Basic Allowance (BA) which should be payable to its Elected Members;
- b. About the roles and responsibilities for which a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) should be paid and the amounts thereof;
- c. About the duties for which travelling and subsistence allowances should be paid and the amounts thereof;
- d. As to whether co-optees to Committees should receive allowances and the amounts thereof;
- e. As to whether the scheme should include an allowance in respect of arranging for the care of children and dependents and if so, the amount thereof;
- f. As to whether the scheme should allow for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index as may be specified by the authority.

Members are required to have regard to the recommendations made by the IRP when deciding on its Scheme of Allowances. In addition to the 2003 Regulations, the IRP considered the 'Guidance on Members Allowances for Local Authorities' issued in 2006 by the Department of Communities and Local Government.

The work of the IRP was supported by officers of MSDC Julie Galvin (Assistant Director, Governance (Monitoring Officer)), Lucinda Joyce (Member Services Manager), and Ellen Fisher (Member Services Officer). The IRP gratefully acknowledges these officers' continued assistance and would also like to commend the input of all Members who completed the questionnaire on this topic, and those who agreed to be interviewed separately.

The IRP is pleased to present its 2026 report for consideration by the Council. In determining these recommendations, the IRP endeavored to strike a balance between appropriately compensating the workload and responsibilities undertaken by Members, reimbursing the expenses incurred in delivery of their duties, the need to attract members of the public from all demographics to service and the continued economically challenging climate.

Astrid Weekes

Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel

## Process and Methodology

### Benchmarking

The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) conducted a benchmarking exercise using the latest data (collected in 2025, published in 2026) from the annual Southeast Employers (SEE) survey of Members' allowances paid by local authorities. The benchmarking exercise was conducted to compare MSDC's current scheme with those for seven neighbouring local authorities of a similar population and number of elected members.

### Questionnaire

The IRP circulated a questionnaire to all Members seeking views on key parts of the existing scheme; the adequacy of the Basic Allowance, Special Responsibility Allowance and Travel and Subsistence and Carer's Allowances, as well as the potential implications running up to and following the Local Governmental Reorganisation (LGR).

The questionnaire yielded a response rate of 29% (14 out of the forty-eight members) and lies within the region of typical survey response rates (5% to 30%).

### Follow-up Interviews and additional comments

In addition to the completed questionnaire, two members submitted comments rather than completing the questionnaire and one member was interviewed.

Interviewees agreed on the need to increase inclusion (also in relation to earnings and gender), diversity and equality amongst Members but recognised that allowances have limited impact.

## Recommendations

Reference	Allowance	Recommendation
Recommendation 1	Basic Allowance (BA)	Increase BA by 3.2% to £6,082.40 in line with the latest CPIH (Consumer Price Index including Housing costs) published on 11/03/2026. NB the updated CPIH as at 22/04/2026, if representing an increase, should be used to calculate the BA.
Recommendation 2	Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)	No change is to be made to SRAs and the policy of one SRA in its Members' Allowances Scheme per member should be maintained.
Recommendation 3	Co-optees Allowances	Increase the allowance paid to Independent Persons for Standards Matters by 3.2% to £800.32 in line with the latest CPIH data. NB the updated CPIH as at 22/04/2026, if representing an increase, should be used to calculate the Cooptees Allowances.
Recommendation 4	Travel and Subsistence Allowances	Rates and Allowances relating to subsistence will be at the current HMRC rates. Payments relating to mileage claims including electric and hybrid personal vehicles owned by the

Reference	Allowance	Recommendation
		Member (not company vehicles) should be brought in line with the Approved Mileage Allowance Payments for all other fuel vehicles.
Recommendation 5	Childcare Allowance	Payment of childcare allowance should continue to be linked to the current National Living Wage due to be increased on 1st April 2026 to £12.71 per hour.
Recommendation 6	Dependent's care	Payment of dependent's care allowance should continue to be linked to the Homecare Association's Minimum Price of Homecare April 2025 to March 2026, of £32.14 per hour.
Recommendation 7	Timing	The Council should adopt the revised scheme to take effect from 13th May 2026.

### Recommendation 1: Basic Allowance (BA)

It is a requirement of the regulations that a BA be offered to all Members of a local authority, and paid in recognition of their workloads and responsibilities, so their role leads to minimal financial loss. The BA is intended to recognise the commitment of all Members for calls on their time including meetings with council employees, meetings with constituents, attendance at political group and council meetings and incidental costs such as the use of their homes.

The questionnaire responses and the separate interview showed that most respondents (64%) felt that the current BA recognises their time and expertise and a considerable number (86%) wanted the link to cost of living to be permanent.

The IRP chose the CPIH (Consumer Price Index including owner occupier housing costs) because it continues to represent a fair reflection of inflation - it is the most comprehensive and includes owner occupier housing costs, measured via 'rental equivalence'.

The latest CPIH is 3.2%. Therefore, our recommendation is that the BA should be increased to £6,082.40. This is still below the benchmarked average BA of £7,029.35.

Please note that the next release date for the CPIH is 22nd April 2026. The IRP believe that should the CPIH be increased at that point, then the new calculation should become applicable.

### Recommendation 2: Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)

The IRP's research of similar neighbouring authorities, and the review of the 2025 South East England (SEE) survey did not reveal any large disparities and noted that MSDC levels remain lower than average.

A considerable number of respondents to the questionnaire (86%) maintained that the SRA should not be increased and were of the opinion that it adequately recognises significant responsibilities and duties undertaken by some Members. Of the 14% of the opposing view, respondents cited, for example, that the work required of the Planning Committees' Members is disproportionately high.

Comments on the questionnaire concerning the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and appear to be anticipatory or speculative. There was reference to Members' workloads changing significantly because of the unitary structure currently being considered. The IRP has noted these views and expects that the next review will re-examine the scheme's quantifying mechanisms across all aspects and should address both the disparities in workload across the committees, while also acknowledging changes in workloads as a direct result of the new structures.

The IRP recommends, therefore, that the SRA should not change and should remain at the following rates this year:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Recommended Allowance (£)</b>
Leaders's Allowance	22,800
Deputy Leaders's Allowance	11,400
Cabinet Member	9,120
Chair of the Council	7,410
Vice-Chair of the Council	2,470
Planning Committee Chair (2)	7,125
Planning Committee Vice-Chair (2)	1,781
Licensing Committee Chair	1,140
Standards Committee Chair	1,140
Scrutiny Committee Chair (2)	4,560
Scrutiny Committee Vice-Chair (2)	1,140
Group Leader	250 (per group)
Audit Committee Chair	3,420

### **Recommendation 3: Allowances paid to co-optees of committees.**

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 Regulations permit an allowance to be paid to persons, co-optees, who are not elected members of an authority, but who are recruited to a committee of the authority in an advisory role for their expertise. In MSDC there are three co-optees- Independent Persons for Standards Matters.

Comparison with benchmarked authorities, using the 2025 South East England (SEE) survey data shows a broad range of payments, the highest at £1243, and the lowest at £365. The median amount paid was £900 per annum. If increased, MSDC's current rate will remain within a reasonable range.

The IRP recommends this allowance is uplifted in line with the Consumer Price Index including owner occupier's housing costs (CPIH) at the time of reporting (25th March 2026) of 3.2% to £800.32.

Please note that the next release date for the CPIH is 22nd April 2026. The IRP believe that should the CPIH be increased at that point, then the new calculation should become applicable.

#### Recommendation 4: Travel and Subsistence

Allowances for travel and subsistence allowances are linked to the rates payable for officers and may be paid to Members for “any duty approved by the authority in connection with or relating to the duties set out in the Council’s Constitution”.

The Office for Low Emission Vehicles advises that when claiming business mileage rates, HMRC Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) rates are applicable when an employee is using a personal electric car. Mid Sussex District Council reimburses employees for business use of their own vehicles and does the same for Members - there is no distinction between fully electric, hybrid, petrol, or diesel vehicles.

The use of fleet/ company vehicles or salary sacrifice/ car loan scheme are not extended to Members at MSDC, therefore, those HMRC rates have not been applied to this travel allowance.

Details	Recommended Rate	Condition
<b>Mileage</b>		
Vehicles		Including petrol, diesel, hybrid and electric cars and vans
Car Mileage	45pence per mile	Only on the first 10,000 miles
	25pence per mile	For every mile travelled in excess of 10,000
Car Passenger Mileage	5pence per mile	per passenger
Motorcycles	24pence per mile	For the first 10,000 miles and each mile thereafter
Cycle allowance	20pence per mile	Includes electrically assisted pedal bikes but excludes motorcycles or any other electric bike
<b>Subsistence</b>		
Breakfast	£7	
Lunch	£10	
Tea	£4	
Evening meal	£13	
Overnight out of pocket expenses	£6 per night	
	£24 per week	

### **Recommendation 5: Childcare Allowance**

The IRP recommends that payment of childcare allowance is linked to the National Living Wage, which will increase 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 to £12.71 per hour for one child, and £25.42 per hour for two or more children.

### **Recommendation 6: Dependent's Care Allowance**

The IRP recommends that payment for specialist dependent's care should be set at the Homecare Association's minimum fee rate, which remains at £32.14 per hour.

### **Recommendation 7: Timing**

The IRP recommends that Council adopts the revised scheme to take effect from 13th May 2026.

## **References**

- *MSDC Annual Council Minutes 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024.*
- *MSDC Council Minutes 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2025.*
- *The 2026 Independent Remuneration Panel Initial Meeting- Officers' Briefing Note.*
- *2025 South East England (SEE) survey data and Infographic.*
- *The Members' Allowance Scheme Review Questionnaire 4<sup>th</sup> February 2026, results, emailed comments, and follow-up interview notes.*
- *GOV.UK: Accredited Official Statistics Announcement- Consumer Price Inflation (including CPIH) UK: March 2026 time series from ONS published 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026.*
- *SmartSurvey.co.uk- Article by Neil Stone: 'What is a Good Survey Response Rate?'*
- *The Office of Low Emissions Website*
- *HMRC Guidance for Travel- Mileage and fuel rates and allowances Updates April 2025*
- *electriccarguide.co.uk: 'HMRC Electric Car Mileage Rates'*
- *Homecare Association's December 2024 report entitled: 'A Minimum Price for Homecare - April 2025 to March 2026'.*
- *GOV.UK National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage Rates April 2026*