

**REPORT TO
ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL
BY THE
INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION
PANEL**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) was established under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 to provide recommendations to the Council on its Members Allowances Scheme.
- 1.2 The IRP has reviewed the Members Allowances Scheme and the findings are set out in the Report.

2. Summary of Recommendations

- 2.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel has undertaken a review of the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Members' Allowances Scheme and makes the following recommendations.

(i)	The Basic Members' Allowance (and Allowances for those co-opted) for 2023-24 be increased by 5%.
(ii)	That the Special Responsibility Allowances be increased by 5% for 2023-24.
(iii)	That additional Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) should only be paid for one special responsibility position.
(iv)	That annual increases in Basic Allowances should be in line with the average Local Government pay awards for staff below Chief Officer level.
(v)	That annual increases in Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid at half (50%) of the average Local Government pay award for staff below Chief Officer level.
(vi)	That travel allowances should be increased in line with staff travel allowances and should change as and when the locally agreed rates change.
(vii)	No Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition
(viii)	Increases in allowances to be effective from 1 st April 2023.

For illustrative purposes the annual change to the SRA (for example), based upon the average staff pay award below Chief Officer level being agreed at 3%, the SRA would increase by 1.5%

3. The Independent Remuneration Panel

- 3.1 The members of the IRP are detailed at the end of this report.
- 3.2 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 provide that allowances schemes may make provision for Councillors' Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances, travelling and subsistence allowances and co-optees allowances and it falls to the IRP to make recommendations about these matters.
- 3.3 Full Council is responsible for setting the Members' Allowances Scheme having regard to the Independent Panel's recommendations.
- 3.4 Where a Scheme makes provision for allowances to be indexed linked then there is a requirement for a review to take place every 4 years.

4. Background Information - Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

- 4.1 Over a quarter of a million people living in the Borough. These are served by 59 members of the Council. Some members of the Council also sit on joint authorities established to deal with police, fire and rescue services, waste, amongst others that are provided throughout South Yorkshire.
- 4.2 The current political composition is:

Party	Number of Seats
Conservative	15
Independent Conservative	2
Labour	34
Liberal Democrat	4
Independent	4
Total Members	59

- 4.3 The Council operates a Strong Leader model of Governance that comprises a Leader and Cabinet each of whom has a specific portfolio of responsibilities.
- 4.4 The Council appoints the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board together with 3 Select Commissions whose role is to hold the executive to account, to conduct in-depth policy reviews and contribute to policy development and to monitor the performance of Council Services.

- 4.5 The Council also appoints a number of other Committees and Panels to exercise its regulatory functions and those functions which are not exercisable by the Executive.

5. Scope of Report

- 5.1 Regulations enable that the Independent Remuneration Panel makes formal recommendations on the following matters:-

- (i) Basic and Special Responsibility allowances;
- (ii) travelling and subsistence allowances; and
- (iii) co-optees' allowances;
 - (a) as to the amount of such allowances and as to the amount of basic allowance;
 - (b) as to whether dependants' carers' allowance should be payable to members of an authority, and as to the amount of such an allowance;
 - (c) as to whether, in the event that the scheme is amended at any time so as to affect an allowance payable for the year in which the amendment is made, payment of allowances may be backdated in accordance with regulation 10(6);
 - (d) 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;

6. Information Provided to the Panel

- 6.1 The Panel met and took evidence in October and November 2023 and also liaised by email outside of the meetings. The Panel was provided with various benchmarking data on allowances paid by other authorities within the region.

- 6.2 The Panel invited the Councillors to raise any aspects of the current Allowances Scheme they wished to bring to the attention of the IRP. The Panel heard from various Councillors.

7. Context

- 7.1 The Member's Allowance Scheme was last reviewed in April 2015 and agreed by Council in May 2015. The Panel recommended that the amounts agreed at this time remain in place for a period of two years. After this period the basic and special responsibility allowances should be reviewed in line with the Retail Price Index.

- 7.2 In July 2017 Council approved a 1.15% reduction in Member's basic allowances and special responsibility allowances in line with amendments to staff terms and conditions being introduced.
- 7.3 Since that time no uplift for inflation has been added meaning that Members Allowances have been static since 2017.
- 7.4 In the same period the Bank of England calculator provides that inflation amounts to some 27%.
- 7.5 In the same period staff pay awards have been as follows (excluding Chief Officers):
- 2018-19 – 2%
 - 2019-20 – 2%
 - 2020-21 – 2.75%
 - 2021-22 – 1.75%
 - 2022-23 – Flat increase of £1,925
 - 2023-24 – £1,925 on SCPs 2-43, plus 3.88% on all NJC allowances
- 7.6 The amount of allowances for other authorities in South Yorkshire is included at Appendix 2.

8. The Basic Allowance

- 8.1 The Panel notes that the Basic Allowance is intended to recognise (a) the time commitment of all Councillors, including calls on their time for meetings with officers, constituents, and their representative role in general; and (b) incidental costs, such as the use of their homes, and internet and phone provision etc. It is not intended to directly recompense for work undertaken or to fully compensate for loss of earnings.
- 8.2 The Panel acknowledges that the role of Councillors depends on a sense of social responsibility and public service and that they are motivated to a significant extent by a sense of public good. Nevertheless, those who decide to stand for election should not be required to make unreasonable sacrifices in their private lives.
- 8.3 The Panel notes that there has been no increase in the allowances payable to Councillors for more than 6 years.
- 8.4 The Panel therefore recommends that the Basic Allowance is increased by 5%.

9. Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)

- 9.1 The 2003 Regulations specify the categories of special responsibilities which may qualify for Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA). Special Responsibility Allowances may be paid to those Members of

the Council who have significant additional responsibilities over and above the generally accepted duties of a Councillor.

- 9.2 The roles for which the Council currently sets Special Responsibility Allowances are set out the current Scheme at Appendix 2.
- 9.3 The Panel recommends that in respect of Special Responsibility allowances be increased by 5%.
- 9.4 The IRP acknowledges that some Councillors may occupy two or more positions of special responsibility and recommends that there is no change to the current scheme which states that SRA will only be paid for one position.

10. Index/Annual Adjustment

- 10.1 The IRP considered it would not be appropriate for their recommendations to be subject to index linking in respect of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances.
- 10.2 The IRP considers that annual increases in Basic Allowances should be in line with the average Local Government pay awards for staff below Chief Officer level.
- 10.3 The IRP considers that annual increases in Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid at half (50%) of the average Local Government pay award for staff below Chief Officer level.
- 10.4 The IRP considers that it would be appropriate that travel allowances should be increased in line with staff travel allowances and then changed when locally agreed rates change.

11. Date of Application of Changes

- 11.1 The Panel recommends that the changes are applied from 1st April 2023.

Independent Review Panel Members:

Carrie Sudbury, Chief Executive - Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber of Commerce
Shafiq Hussain, Chief Executive - Voluntary Action Rotherham
Rev Phil Batchford – Vicar of Rotherham and St Paul's Masbrough