

Report of the Wealden Parish Independent Remuneration Panel on Town and Parish Councillor Allowances for 2023/2024

Introduction

1. This is the 22nd Annual Report of the Parish Independent Remuneration Panel for 2023/24. The Panel is established by Wealden District Council under Regulation 27 of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, for the Town and Parish Councils in its area (full list of Town and Parish Councils to which the report applies is attached at Appendix A).

Summary

2. The Panel recommends:

- a) That allowances should be paid in accordance with three bands, Levels 1 to 3 as defined in Appendix A;
- b) That there be an increase in allowances in line with that recommended for district Councillors, with Basic and Chairman's Allowances rounded to the nearest pound.

2023/24	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
<i>Basic Allowance</i>	£180	£447	£1,426
<i>Chairman's Allowance</i>	£312	£702	£1,969

- c) That the policy to fix Travelling Allowances in line with HM Revenue & Customs 'Approved Mileage Allowance Payment' (AMAP) rates be re-affirmed;
- d) Subsistence Allowance – the following allowances for Councillors to apply:

Breakfast	£7.15	When away from home on approved Council business before 8 a.m.
Lunch	£9.35	When away from home on approved Council business between 12 noon and 2 p.m.
Evening Meal	£16.50	When away from home on approved Council business after 7 p.m.
Overnight absence outside London	£94	
London and specific Conferences	£105	

All claims must be accompanied by a valid receipt and payment is subject to Councillors signing to say they have actually and necessarily incurred the amount being claimed.

- e) That the recommendations set out above are all proposed for implementation at the commencement of the financial year 2023/24. However, Town and Parish Councils can choose the extent to which they wish to implement these allowances; and
- f) The Panel notes with regret that it is still not possible under the current legislation to recommend a Carers' Allowance for Parish/ Town Councillors, but would wish for all Parish and Town Councils to consider adopting a basic allowance to enable Parish/Town Councillors to use this to cover care costs where need be to attend meetings.

Membership of Panel and Meetings

3. The Panel consists of three members – Mr Edward Stone (Chairman), Mr Stephen Hallam and Mr Clive Mills.
4. The Panel met on 4 November 2021. The Panel subsequently dealt with the preparation of this report through discussion and advice from officers via email and via the medium of MS Teams on 15th November 2022 to finalise this report.

Panel Remit

5. The Panel produces a report in relation to the members of the town and parish councils for which the Wealden District Council is the responsible authority and in respect of which it is established, making recommendations, in accordance with the provisions of regulation 29 of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 as to:
 - a) the amount of parish basic allowance payable to members of such town and parish councils;
 - b) the amount of travelling and subsistence allowance payable to members of such town and parish councils;
 - c) whether parish basic allowance should be payable only to the Mayor or Chairman of any such town and parish council or to all of its members;
 - d) whether, if parish basic allowance should be payable to both the Mayor or Chairman and the other members of any such town and parish council, the allowance payable to the Mayor or Chairman should be set at a level higher than that payable to the other members, and, if so, the higher amount so payable (Chairman's Allowance); and
 - e) the responsibilities or duties in respect of which members should receive parish travelling and subsistence allowance.

Parish Basic and Chairman's Allowances

6. As in previous years, the Panel has examined available data in order to assist in determination of a recommendation on parish/town council basic allowance and whether it should be payable to both the Mayor or Chairman and the other elected members of a town or parish council.
7. The Panel has considered last year's report to Town and Parish Councils recommending allowances for 2023/24.
8. The Clerk to the Panel had invited all Town and Parish Councillors, via the clerks, to provide any comments on the allowance scheme. Five Parish/Town clerks responded on behalf of their council, and five Parish/Town Councillors responded individually. A summary is set out below:
 - *The majority of Parish/Town Councils that responded had chosen not to operate a remuneration scheme.*
 - *The Basic Allowance is sufficient, and the Chairman's Allowance and Travelling and Subsistence Allowances are appropriate.*
 - *It was felt important to keep the scheme and that it should be made known when advertising vacancies to encourage more financially challenged individuals to feel included in the application process.*
 - *It was felt that a UK Government review should be undertaken on the parish/town council level of local government; looking at the grass roots. Parish/Town Councils don't necessarily have the powers of higher level authorities, but we do a great amount on the ground to support the community, alongside the community and voluntary sector which is unseen and unaccounted for. If members' allowances need to be increased then it needs to be funded by a different source.*

- **Chairman's allowance** *Once again it depends on the intentions of the individual. The current Town Mayor doesn't look at the amount of the allowance, but how they can support their town. She is proud to have been elected as Mayor. There are a large number of civic engagements through the year, and the local events and engagements are her first priority, before attending engagements further afield.*
 - *Expenses aren't justified and there shouldn't be any increase in the current year.*
 - *The current allowance is not sufficient to cover expenses and councillors in some situations would need to subsidise expenditure from their income (e.g pension), particularly if Councillors are expected to serve on more than one committee.*
 - *The basic allowance does not reimburse for the cost of carrying out this role, thus deterring those who may have the experience and expertise for the job.*
9. In response to the feedback, the Panel felt that it was important to remind all Councillors that this was an **Allowance Scheme**, not a salary, and therefore not intended to compensate the number of hours worked, nor reimburse for the effort they put in.
 10. The Panel emphasised that it is keen to see all Parish and Town Councils adopt a scheme of some sort, even if it is normal practice not to claim. This is to ensure that no potential candidate should be put off standing due to the costs of working as a local councillor, and to ensure that Parish and Town Councillors could choose to claim an allowance should they need to do so.
 11. Following discussion, the Panel **recommends** that the increase in allowances is in line with that recommended for District Councillors at 3%, rounded to the nearest £1. This is in line with the Panel's recommendations for Wealden District Council.
 12. Regulation 29(2) requires that recommendations be expressed not only in cash terms but also as a percentage of the amount recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel as the Basic Allowance for Wealden District Councillors. The Panel is recommending that the allowance is increased for District Councillors to £4992 per annum for the financial year 2023/24. Based on that figure, the percentages have been incorporated into the attached Appendix A.

Chairman's Allowance

13. As indicated in previous reports, individual Town and Parish Councils are free to decide whether an allowance should be payable only to the Mayor or Chairman and/or to all of its members. The Chairman's Allowance, as recommended by this report, is intended to be paid as a substitute for the Basic Allowance rather than in addition to it, but this is at the discretion of each Town and Parish Council.
14. Town and Parish Councils are reminded that the Chairman's Allowance (again detailed in the attached Appendix A) is an allowance personal to the Parish/Town Councillor elected Mayor or Chairman. It is entirely separate to the allowance under the Local Government Act 1972, Sections 15(5) and 35(5), which is payable as the Parish/Town Council thinks fit to reasonably meet the expenses of the office of Mayor or Chairman.
15. The Panel **recommends** an increase to all Chairman's Allowances of 3%, on the same basis as increases to Parish/Town Council Basic Allowances, as detailed in Appendix A attached.

Travelling Allowance

16. The Panel wanted to clarify that under Regulation 26, Town and Parish Councils may pay travelling and subsistence allowances, including an allowance in respect of travel by bicycle or by any other non-motorised form of transport, undertaken or incurred in connection with the performance of any duty within one or more of the categories set out in that Regulation. This also includes provision for encouraging car sharing.

17. Councillors can receive up to a tax-free approved amount when using their own vehicles in carrying out their duties. These payments are known as Approved Mileage Allowance Payments (AMAP), and as from 6 April 2011 the following rules apply:

Car or Van – 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25p per mile thereafter;

Motor Cycle – 24p per mile (all miles);

- Cycle – 20p per mile (all miles); and

A 5 pence per mile per passenger supplement for up to four passengers.

18. The Panel observed that there was no mention of claims for other travel costs within the Allowance Scheme, such as public transport and taxis. It was suggested that this category be included and reimbursed in full, subject to the Council's approval.

Subsistence Allowance

19. The Panel **recommends** that the current level of subsistence rates for 2023/24 be amended to increase the evening meal allowance and remove the reference to a tea allowance, as follows:

Breakfast	£7.15	When away from home on approved Parish/ Town Council business before 8 am.
Lunch	£9.35	When away from home on approved Parish/ Town Council business between 12 noon and 2 pm.
Evening Meal	£16.50	When away from home on approved Parish/ Town Council business after 7 pm.
Overnight absence	£94	When outside London
London and specific Conferences	£105	

20. It was confirmed that payment should still be subject to Parish/ Town Councillors certifying that they had actually and necessarily incurred the amount being claimed. The Panel commented that subsistence allowance was a 'top up' on the amount it would cost a councillor to eat at home.

Co-opted Members

21. As set out above, under the relevant legislation co-opted members of Town and Parish Councils are not eligible to be paid Parish/Town Council Basic Allowances nor Chairman's Allowances, but may claim Travelling and Subsistence Allowances. It is not in the Panel's remit to make any recommendations that this change.

Communication of Allowances

22. On receipt of this Report, Town and Parish Councils must advertise receipt of the report in line with Regulation 30 (2003 Regulations).
23. In setting the levels of allowances, Town and Parish Councils must show they have regard to the IRP's recommendations, but it is entirely up to each Town and Parish Council what scheme of allowances is adopted. The Panel has expressed its preference that an allowance scheme is adopted by all Councils, even if not claimed by individual Councillors. When adopting a scheme, Parish and Town Councils must under the Regulations publish its scheme by public notice.

Other Business

24. The Panel did not consider that it was appropriate to make a recommendation for more than one year.
25. The Panel would like to express its thanks to the Parish and Town Councils and Officers who had assisted it in its work and the preparation of this report.

Edward Stone
Chairman

Dated: 15 November 2022

	LEVEL1	LEVEL2	LEVEL3	
Basic Allowance	£180	£447	£1,426	
Chairman's Allowance	£ 312	£702	£ 1,969	
PARISH	No. of Cllrs	Maximum Basic Allowance	Maximum Chairman's Allowance	% of Recommended District Basic Allowance
<u>Level 1</u>				
Alciston	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Little Horsted	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Selmeston	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Cuckmere Valley	7	£180	£312	3.61%
Berwick	7	£180	£312	3.61%
Wartling	7	£180	£312	3.61%
Long Man	7	£180	£312	3.61%
Hooe	7	£180	£312	3.61%
Arlington	7	£180	£312	3.61%
Laughton	7	£180	£312	3.61%
Isfield	7	£180	£312	3.61%
Chiddingly	9	£180	£312	3.61%
Hellingly	15	£180	£312	3.61%
Hadlow Down	7	£180	£312	3.61%
Fletching	9	£180	£312	3.61%
Warbleton	11	£180	£312	3.61%
Frant	11	£180	£312	3.61%
Alfriston	7	£180	£312	3.61%
East Hoathly/Halland	9	£180	£312	3.61%
Chalvington/Ripe	7	£180	£312	3.61%
Horam	11	£180	£312	3.61%
East Dean/Friston	9	£180	£312	3.61%
Framfield	11	£180	£312	3.61%
Hartfield	13	£180	£312	3.61%
Ninfield	9	£180	£312	3.61%
Danehill	9	£180	£312	3.61%
Buxted	15	£180	£312	3.61%
Withyham	13	£180	£312	3.61%
Herstmonceux	11	£180	£312	3.61%
Mayfield/ Five Ashes	15	£180	£312	3.61%
Maresfield	14	£180	£312	3.61%
Rotherfield	13	£180	£312	3.61%
Westham	13	£180	£312	3.61%
Pevensay	13	£180	£312	3.61%
Wadhurst	15	£180	£312	3.61%

<u>Level 2</u>				
<i>Forest Row</i>	15	£447	£702	8.95%
<i>Willingdon/Jevington</i>	19	£447	£702	8.95%
<i>Polegate</i>	15	£447	£702	8.95%
<i>Heathfield/Waldron</i>	21	£447	£702	8.95%
<u>Level 3</u>				
<i>Hailsham</i>	24	£1,426	£1,969	28.57%
<i>Uckfield</i>	15	£1,426	£1,969	28.57%
<i>Crowborough</i>	16	£1,426	£1,969	28.57%