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# REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL: 2019 REVIEW

Mr Quentin Tallon  
(Chairman)

Mrs Patricia Dundas

Mrs Joyce Williams

## Recommendations

1. That the Members' allowances should only be increased by the Council following recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel.
2. That the basic allowance be increased by 2% to £5,698, (this incorporates a £50 increase to the home ICT allowance).
3. That the Special Responsibility Allowances be increased by 2% to give the following levels:

Role	Current Allowance	Recommendations from the IRP from April 2020 with a 2% increase (except for those marked with an asterisk)
Leader	17,435	17,784
Cabinet Member	13,723	13,997
Chair of Planning Committee	3,211	3,767*
Vice-Chair of Planning Committee	1,604	1,881*
Chair of Licensing Committee	867	884
Vice-Chair of Licensing Committee	577	589
Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee	2,889	2,947
Vice-Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee	1,444	1,473
Chair of Audit Committee	723	737
Chair of Standards Committee	320	326
Group Leaders	643	656
Independent Members of Standards Committee	318	324
Mayor (Chair of Council)	481	491
Mayor (Duties of Civic Head)	7,016	7,156
Deputy Mayor	1,404	1,432

\*These figures include the recommended 15% increase to the SRA for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee. Should the 15% not be approved by Council, the new level of SRA for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee would be £3,275 and £1,636 respectively.

- 4. That the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair and Vice-Chair of Planning Committee be increased by 15% in addition to the 2% inflation increase to give the following levels:**
  - **Chair of Planning Committee - £3,767**
  - **Vice-Chair of Planning Committee - £1,881**
  
- 5. That the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Licensing Committee be split between the Chair and Vice-Chair on a 60/40 basis and formalised within the scheme.**
  
- 6. That consideration be given to increasing the Members' training budget in order to equip Members with the knowledge and expertise required to undertake their role.**
  
- 7. That consideration be given to providing Members with the facility to submit the travel claim form electronically.**

If the recommendations in the report are agreed by Council, the total increase in the Members' allowance budget will be **£9658** this excludes the recommended increase to the Member's training budget.

# 1. Introduction

## *Membership*

1.1. The Cheltenham Borough Council Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) has been established pursuant to the provisions of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The panel members were appointed by the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer in December 2006 under delegated authority from Council. The current panel Membership is:

- Mr Quentin Tallon
- Mrs Patricia Dundas
- Mrs Joyce Williams
- Paul Johnstone

1.2. Unfortunately for the purpose of this full review, Paul Johnstone was unable to partake, however, remains a member of the IRP.

## *Terms of Reference*

1.3. Pursuant to the 2003 Regulations, the terms of reference for the Panel are to make recommendations on the following:

- (a) as to the responsibilities or duties in respect of which the following should be available -
  - (i) special responsibility allowance;
  - (ii) travelling and subsistence allowance; and
  - (iii) co-optees' allowance;
- (b) as to the amount of such allowances and as to the amount of basic allowance;
- (c) as to whether dependants' carers' allowance should be payable to members of an authority, and as to the amount of such an allowance;
- (d) 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);
- (e) 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;

## *Recent History of Members' Allowances*

1.4. When reviewing its scheme a council may not adopt a new scheme or re-adopt an old scheme without first having considered the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel established for that purpose.

1.5. The existing scheme of Members' allowances has been in place since the last full review in 2014, it provides for basic allowances for all elected Members, special responsibility allowances (SRAs) paid in respect of identified roles and responsibilities and travel and dependent carers payments. In

September of each intervening year, the Democratic Services Team Leader liaises with the Chair of the IRP to decide if there are any issues which require the panel to meet.

- 1.6. When Council considered the IRP report as part of the budget report on 12 February 2016 they decided that they would award a 1% increase to be in line with the salary increase given to staff. They also wished to apply this increase to all SRAs and the civic allowances.
- 1.7. In 2017, the IRP recommended that the scheme be changed to adopt Council's preferred method of indexation i.e. the increase should be in line with that given to staff rather than the % increase in the median gross weekly earning for the South West which had been adopted by the panel previously. This was agreed by Council. All basic allowances, SRAs and Civic Allowances were increased by 1% from April 2017 in line with the increase given to staff.
- 1.8. The IRP was convened in November 2017 at the request of Members to review some issues, including the split of the SRA for the Licensing Committee. Council resolved that the SRA for the Licensing Committee Chair be split between the Chair and Vice-Chair on a 60/40 basis until a full evidence-based review could be carried out as part of the next full review.
- 1.9. The next full review was originally due to commence in October 2018, however, due to the retirement of the Democratic Services Manager, it was agreed that the full review would be postponed until 2019. Members were contacted and did not raise any issues to bring to the attention of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) as part of the scheme for 2019/20. Council, therefore, agreed in February 2019 to adopt the following approach:

Increase the following allowances by a % equal to the proposed increase to staff relating to 2019/20 (i.e. 2 %) from April 2019:

- The Basic Allowance;
- The level of all Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA); and
- The Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral allowance.

## **2. The Review**

### *Scope of Review*

- 2.1. The scope of the review was to consider all aspects of the scheme and specifically:
  - To consider whether the impact of any changes to the role of Members over the last four years and any changes anticipated during the next four years justify a change to the level of Basic Allowance, including the amount of any reduction due to the voluntary nature of the Councillors' role.
  - To review the appropriateness of linking allowances to the Local Government staff pay award.
  - To consider the duties, responsibilities and accountabilities of each role that currently attract a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) and determine whether each role justifies the payment of an SRA and, where an SRA is justified, whether the current multiplier used to set the level of allowance correctly reflects the significance of the role.
  - To consider the duties, responsibilities and accountabilities of any roles that do not currently attract a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) and determine whether any of those roles

justifies the payment of an SRA and, where an SRA is justified, to set the multiplier so that the level of allowance correctly reflects the significance of the role.

- To provide a clear documented scheme to ensure the appropriate payment of Travel and Subsistence Allowances, without creating unnecessary barriers to claiming.
- To provide a clear documented scheme to ensure the appropriate payment of claims for Dependants' Carers Allowances, without creating unnecessary barriers to claiming.
- Review the Mayoral Allowances (although these fall outside of the current Members' Allowance scheme the panel was asked to look at them as part of our original review in 2006 and have repeated this every 4 years in the full review).
- To review the suspension and repayment of allowances requirements within the scheme.
- To review the provision for ICT resource in the scheme.

### *Support to the Panel*

- 2.2. The Panel was assisted by Bev Thomas, Democratic Services Team Leader and Sophie McGough, Democracy Officer.

## **3. Basic Allowance (BA)**

- 3.1. The recognised guidance states that the BA is intended to compensate Councillors for the time commitment required and to cover any incidental costs; it is not intended to be a salary.

- 3.2. In determining the basic allowance, the IRP adopted a formula approach related pro rata to an equivalent salary for a 37 hour week. During the first review in 2007, it was decided to base the calculation on a salary figure of £20,000 per annum as at the time of writing the report in March 2007, this figure was similar to the Median Gross annual earnings in the South West for 2006 (£22,042).

- 3.3. Therefore the calculation to work out the Basic Allowance at that time was:

$$15/37 \times £20,000 \times 67\% \times 46/52 = £4805$$

hours per week x equivalent annual salary x (100% - voluntary element reduction) x working weeks per year/weeks per year.

- 3.4. In subsequent years, the basic allowance was increased in line with the median gross weekly earning for the South West. However, following the recommendations of the IRP in 2017, Council adopted the preferred method of indexation i.e. the increase should be in line with that given to staff rather than the % increase in the median gross weekly earnings for the South West. This has given rise to the current figure of £5,536.00.

### *Data*

- 3.5. The Panel reviewed the methodology used by a number of other local authorities and compared data with district councils in Gloucestershire and throughout the South West region, as well as Cheltenham Borough Council's 'Nearest Neighbours' as identified by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy for benchmarking purposes.

- 3.6. Taking the comparative data at face value, Cheltenham Borough Council remains at the higher end of the BA payable within the County, the region and among the Nearest Neighbours. It is around £70 higher than the County average, is approximately 14% higher than the average of the Nearest Neighbours and 10% higher than the average in the region.
- 3.7. When considering the number of Councillors per resident taken across the borough as a whole, Cheltenham Borough Councillors has one of the highest number of residents per Councillor in the County and among the Nearest Neighbours. However, it is worth noting that the Local Government Boundary Commission have recently written to CBC explaining that it will be conducting an electoral review, starting in autumn 2020. It is anticipated that this will be implemented in spring 2022 in time for the May elections and will, therefore, need to be considered by the IRP during subsequent reviews.

#### DISTRICT COUNCILS IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Name	Basic Allowance	Estimated Population (mid-2017)	No of Councillors	Residents per Councillor
Tewkesbury	£7,200.00	90,332	38	2377
Gloucester	£5,943.80	129,083	39	3310
<b>Cheltenham</b>	<b>£5,536.00</b>	<b>117,128</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2928</b>
Stroud	£5,265.00	118,130	51	2316
Forest of Dean	£4,850.00	85,957	38	2262
Cotswold	£4,000.00	87,509	34	2574
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>£5,465.80</b>	<b>104,690</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2628</b>

#### DISTRICT COUNCILS IN THE SOUTH WEST

Name	Basic Allowance	Estimated Population	No of Councillors	Residents per Councillor
Tewkesbury	£7,200.00	90,332	38	2377
South Somerset	£6,752.00	167,216	60	2787
Gloucester	£5,943.80	129,083	39	3310
Exeter	£5,750.00	129,800	39	
Teignbridge	£5,589.00	131,437	46	2857
<b>Cheltenham</b>	<b>£5,536.00</b>	<b>117,128</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2928</b>
Stroud	£5,265.00	118,130	51	2316

Weymouth and Portland	£5,250.00	65,751	36	1826
West Dorset	£5,250.00	102,064	42	2430
South Hams	£5,000.00	83,400	31	
Somerset West and Taunton Council	£4,950.00	148,424	59	2516
Mid Devon	£4,865.00	80,623	42	1920
Forest of Dean	£4,850.00	86,000	38	
Purbeck	£4,790.00	46,756	25	1870
North Devon	£4,754.00	93,667	43	
North Dorset	£4,698.00	71,096	33	2154
Torridge	£4,660.47	67,821	36	1884
Sedgemoor	£4,568.00	120,500	48	
West Devon	£4,242.00	54,000	31	1785
East Devon	£4,360.00	142,265	59	2411
Taunton Deane	£4,344.00	117,423	56	2097
Mendip	£4,271.00	113,513	47	2415
East Dorset	£4,190.95	89,384	29	3082
Cotswold	£4,000.00	87,509	34	2574
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>£5,045.00</b>	<b>102,222</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>2397</b>

#### CIPFA NEAREST NEIGHBOURS

Name	Basic Allowance	Estimated Population	No of Councillors	Residents per Councillor
Rugby	£6,556.92	106,350	42	2532
Gloucester	£5,943.80	129,083	39	3310
<b>Cheltenham</b>	<b>£5,536.00</b>	<b>117,128</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2928</b>
Kettering	£5,394.00	100,252	36	2785
Rushmoor	£5,202.00	95,817	39	2457
Wellingborough	£4,887.62	78,914	36	2192
Carlisle	£4,887.00	108,274	52	2082



East Staffordshire	£4,818.00	117,552	39	3014
Gravesham	£4,718.50	106,121	44	2412
Lincoln	£4,701.46	98,438	33	2983
Wyre Forest	£4,626.00	100,715	33	3052
Redditch	£4,437.00	85,204	29	2938
Worcester	£4,300.00	102,314	35	2923
Ipswich	£4,007.00	138,480	48	2885
Burnley	£3,570.00	87,705	45	1949
Pendle	£3,000.00	90,696	49	1851
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>£4,786.58</b>	<b>103,940</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2643</b>

### *Working Hours*

- 3.8. We issued Members with a survey that asked a series of questions relating to the number of hours worked, the expenses incurred by Members and the hours spent on roles that attract an SRA, we also interviewed a number of Members to further understand their roles and the time commitment involved. We received an 85% response rate to the survey and interviewed 12 Members. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those Members who engaged in the review process.
- 3.9. It was acknowledged that each Councillor is responsible for determining how to carry out their role and that there are many factors that influence an individual's approach. Similarly, during the interviews, it was noted that particular wards are generally more demanding than others i.e. some experience more issues with community cohesion. The volume of casework and the types of issues encountered also varied considerably across the wards and some Members highlighted that they were being increasingly asked to deal with more complex issues such as hospital appeals and immigration issues.
- 3.10. The amount of time spent on council duties varied considerably from individual to individual and there is no set time expectation. Whilst several Members highlighted that it can sometimes be difficult to balance council work and home life, it was established that 42% of Members who responded to the survey carry out some form of paid employment and are able to operate effectively as a Councillor with the remaining time they have available.
- 3.11. Councillors were asked how many hours per week they spent on council duties and, where appropriate, to identify the split between 'ordinary' councillor duties, and those pursuant to any Special Responsibility/ies that they held. From the 34 responses received, the amount of time spent on council duties per week ranged from 4 to 50 hours, however, the average was 20 hours a week. It is worth noting that this figure may be skewed slightly, as the average number of hours spent on council work was considerably higher for Cabinet Members. We have therefore omitted the Cabinet Member responses from the calculations, and this reduces the average number of hours spent to 15. For the 6 Cabinet Members who responded to the survey, the figure ranged from 21-50 hours and the average number of hours spent on council work each week was 40 hours.

### *Voluntary Reduction*

3.12. 80% of Members agreed that part of their time was given on a voluntary basis.

3.13. Government guidance to Members' Allowances Panels states:

*"It is important that some element of the work of members continues to be voluntary – that some hours are not remunerated. This must be balanced against the need to ensure that financial loss is not suffered by elected members, and further to ensure that, despite the input required, people are encouraged to come forward as elected members and that their service to the community is retained.*

3.14. As such, the application of a voluntary public service reduction remains a standard practice across many authorities. We asked those Members who agreed that their time was given on a voluntary basis how much of their time they considered to be voluntary and the responses ranged from 6%-100%. However, on average, Members considered 33.6% of the total number of hours spent on council work each week to be on a voluntary basis. We therefore agreed that the existing voluntary public service reduction of 33% was appropriate and fair.

### *ICT Provision as part of the Basic Allowance*

3.15. At the last full review in 2014, it was agreed that £100 should be included in the basic allowance for home ICT. As part of the review, we asked Members whether they still considered this to be necessary. Whilst some Members felt that this was now redundant as they would likely have facilities such as broadband in any case, 70% of survey respondents felt that the £100 was still necessary to pay for expenses such as telephone calls, stationery and the printing of letters to constituents. After careful consideration and following conversations with Members, we still considered the allowance to be relevant and given that it hasn't been increased since 2014, we recommend this be increased to £150.

### *Indexation*

3.16. As part of the consultation, we asked Members whether Members' allowances should be increased automatically by reference to a particular index e.g. Local Government Pay Award (current position) or whether Members' allowances should only be increased by the Council following recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel. The majority of Members (76%) felt that it was appropriate for the allowances scheme to remain linked to the local government staff pay award and the panel acknowledge that this is the approach adopted by the majority of council's in the South West. Several Members also highlighted this during the interviews as they felt it would be inappropriate for Members to be awarded a pay increase higher than that of Council staff. Whilst the panel takes the Members' comments on board, we felt that the role of a Councillor is considerably different to that of a council officer and parallels should not be drawn between the two. We felt that the allowance is important in increasing the diversity of experience, age and background of councillors. It will also assist with retaining experienced councillors and making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded from it. As such, we recommend that the Members' allowances be increased by the Council following recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel as opposed to linking it to the local government staff pay award.

**Recommendation: That the Members' allowances should only be increased by the Council following recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel.**

3.17. Several Members raised the point that correspondence from Constituents had generally increased over the years as a result of email. The panel also acknowledged the extra scrutiny due to the increased prevalence of social media. Having carefully considered the number of hours worked and increased responsibility, we recommend a 2% increase to the basic allowance.

**Recommendation: That the basic allowance be increased by 2% to £5,698, (this incorporates a £50 increase to the home ICT allowance).**

## 4. Special Responsibility Allowances

4.1. The Special Responsibility Allowances are based on a formula linked to the basic allowance that takes into account the role description, the level of knowledge required to perform the role, the level of responsibility and risk that comes with the role and the hours required to perform it. Whilst a different formula is adopted for the Leader's Special Responsibility Allowance, the rationale is similar.

4.2. We considered each of the existing SRAs in the context of the time commitment required and levels of personal responsibility and accountability and met with a number of Members in receipt of an SRA, including 2 Cabinet Members and the Mayor.

### Special Responsibility Allowances: recommended changes

4.3. Having listened to the evidence from existing SRA holders and other Councillors, and receiving no strong arguments in respect of these posts, we recommend a 2% increase to SRA's in line with the increase to the basic allowance.

Role	Current Allowance	Recommendations from the IRP from April 2020 with a 2% increase (except for those marked with an asterisk)
Leader	17,435	17,784
Cabinet Member	13,723	13,997
Chair of Planning Committee	3,211	3,767*
Vice-Chair of Planning Committee	1,604	1,881*
Chair of Licensing Committee	867	884
Vice-Chair of Licensing Committee	577	589
Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee	2,889	2,947
Vice-Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee	1,444	1,473
Chair of Audit Committee	723	737

Chair of Standards Committee	320	326
Group Leaders	643	656
Independent Members of Standards Committee	318	324
Mayor (Chair of Council)	481	491
Mayor (Duties of Civic Head)	7,016	7,156
Deputy Mayor	1,404	1,432

\*These figures include the recommended 15% increase to the SRA for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee. Should the 15% not be approved by Council, the new level of SRA for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee would be £3,275 and £1,636 respectively.

#### *Chair and Vice-Chair of Licensing Committee*

- 4.4. As part of our review in 2017, we were asked to consider the allowance for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Licensing committee following changes to the committee structure that came in to effect in September 2017. We recommended an informal arrangement whereby the allowance was split between the Chair and Vice-Chair on a 60/40 basis but agreed to revisit this as part of our 4 year review once more evidence was available on the workload involved. We met with the Chair and Vice-Chair who both felt that the 60/40 split was still appropriate given the extensive legislation and training required to fulfil the role of Vice-Chair.

**Recommendation: That the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Licensing Committee be split between the Chair and Vice-Chair on a 60/40 basis and formalised within the scheme.**

#### *Chair and Vice-Chair of Planning Committee*

- 4.5. We met with both the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning committee and whilst neither requested an increase in the SRA we felt that the work of the Planning Committee had increased quite markedly and the SRA should be adjusted to reflect this. Of note was the fact that the knowledge required to fulfil the role is becoming increasingly more complex as a result of the evolving legislation and the need to keep informed of changes to the emerging local plan, the JCS and NPPF. Having considered the time involved and the weight of the decisions being made we recommend a 15% increase to the SRA for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee. It is worth outlining that these new rates would also be subject to the 2% increase to SRA's that the panel are also recommending.

**That the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair and Vice-Chair of Planning Committee be increased by 15% in addition to the 2% inflation increase to give the following levels:**

- **Chair of Planning Committee - £3,767**
- **Vice-Chair of Planning Committee - £1,881**

## **Consideration of any new SRA's**

### **Appointments to Outside Bodies**

- 4.6. As part of the review we endeavoured to consider the duties, responsibilities and accountabilities of any roles that do not currently attract a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) and determine whether any of those roles justifies the payment of an SRA and, where appropriate set the multiplier so that the level of allowance correctly reflects the significance of the role.
- 4.7. Several Members suggested that Members should receive an SRA if nominated to represent the Council on the board of an outside body in view of the hours they put in. In particular, the role as the Non-Executive Director of the Publica Board and a council appointed trustee on the Cheltenham Trust Board were raised as appointments that required a significant amount of time and expertise.
- 4.8. We heard from the current post holder of both of these roles in order to better understand the requirements of the appointments. We also consulted with the council's Legal providers who outlined the complexities of providing an SRA for such appointments. They advised that The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 set out the statutory basis for allowances and regulation 4 provides for payment of the same basic allowance to all Members. Payment of an allowance for those who sit on outside bodies would not be part of the basic allowance and therefore needs to be considered in the context of an SRA under Regulation 5. Regulation 5 sets out the categories when determining a scheme for SRAs and is outlined below for reference.

#### *Special responsibility allowance*

*5.—(1) A scheme made under this Part may provide, in accordance with paragraph (2), for the payment for each year for which that scheme relates of an allowance ("special responsibility allowance") to such members of the authority as have such special responsibilities in relation to the authority as are specified in the scheme and are within one or more of the following categories—*

- (a) acting as leader or deputy leader of a political group within the authority;*
- (b) acting as a member of an executive where the authority are operating executive arrangements within the meaning of Part II of the Local Government Act 2000;*
- (c) presiding at meetings of a committee or sub-committee of the authority, or a joint committee of the authority and one or more other authorities, or a sub-committee of such a joint committee;*
- (d) representing the authority at meetings of, or arranged by, any other body;*
- (e) acting as a member of a committee or sub-committee of the authority which meets with exceptional frequency or for exceptionally long periods;*
- (f) acting as the spokesman of a political group on a committee or sub-committee of the authority;*
- (g) acting as a member of an adoption panel within the meaning of the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983(2);*
- (h) acting as a member of any committee or sub-committee that deals with any function arising under any enactment authorising the authority to license or control the carrying on of any activity;*
- (i) carrying out such other activities in relation to the discharge of the authority's functions as require of the member an amount of time and effort equal to or greater than would be required of him by*

*any one of the activities mentioned in sub-paragraphs (a) to (h) (whether or not that activity is specified in the scheme).*

- 4.9. Payments in relation to attendance on outside bodies are only likely to fall under either regulation 5(d) and (i). However, the issue with 5(d) is that Members nominated, for example, on the Airport or the Cheltenham Trust take positions as Directors of the Airport or Trustees and therefore when they attend Board meetings they are there in their capacity as Director or Trustee and are not representing the Authority, thus regulation 5(d) does not apply. Unfortunately, regulation 5(i) also does not apply because when Members take up positions such as Directors or Trustees with outside bodies when they are undertaking that role on behalf of the Airport or the Trust, they are not discharging council functions. There are also various rules that prevent the payment of allowances for those who sit on the Boards for Airports and Teckal companies. Moreover, a Member can only receive one SRA and cannot receive any additional allowances. This means that if we did find that any nominations to outside bodies do fall under regulation 5(d) or (i) you would need to look at the impact of other SRAs.
- 4.10. Whilst we fully appreciate the time commitment and knowledge and skills required to undertake such roles, the Legal provisions highlight the difficulties in allocating an SRA to outside body appointments and as such, we are minded to maintain the status quo.

#### **Planning Committee**

- 4.11. 2 Members suggested that Members of the Planning Committee should receive an allowance to reflect the time commitment and weight of the decisions being made. After some discussion, we concluded that all Members are expected to take a role on committees and working groups as part of their basic duties. Whilst acknowledging that Planning Committee does require more of a regular time commitment, Members do have an element of choice on which committees and working groups they put themselves forward for. We also feel that if an allowance was paid, it would set precedents for other committees and so agreed Members of the Planning Committee should not receive an SRA.

#### **Special Responsibility Allowances: recommended no change**

##### **Mayoral Allowance**

- 4.12. Whilst the Mayoral allowance falls outside of the current Members allowance scheme the panel was asked to look at it as part of its initial review in 2006 and has also done so at subsequent reviews. Following the interviews and survey, we were also asked by a small number of Councillors to consider increasing the Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral allowance as they felt the current level acted as a barrier to working Members who wished to be Mayor. They felt that a significant amount of time was required to complete the duties that are expected of the role and the allowance should be increased to reflect this.
- 4.13. We compared the Mayoral allowance with other councils in the South West and as can be evidenced by the below table, Cheltenham's Mayoral allowance is the highest in the region and is almost double the regional average. The Deputy Mayoral allowance is more in line with other councils in the South West although is still higher than the regional average.
- 4.14. Having spoken with Members and reviewed the comparative data we concluded that that the Mayoral allowance is not designed to compensate a Member for loss of earnings should they decide

to give up their usual employment in their year of office. The panel considers that the current allowance reflects the considerable amount of work that the Mayor does for the town during their year of office and the support given to that role by the Deputy Mayor and although it is an honour for any Member to serve as Mayor, they would need to think carefully about the time commitment required before taking on the role.

- 4.15. We were also asked to look at incorporating an amount into the Mayoral allowance to pay for the consort's expenses, however, concluded that as it is at the discretion of the Mayor as to whether they have a consort this should not be included within the allowance.

#### **MAYORAL ALLOWANCE COMPARSION**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Mayor</b>	<b>Deputy Mayor</b>
<b>Cheltenham</b>	<b>£7,016</b>	<b>£1,404</b>
Exeter	£5,750	£1,438
Gloucester	£3,566.28	1,188.76
West Devon	£3000	£825
Somerset West and Taunton	£2,930	£1,570
Tewkesbury	£2,200	£1,350
Weymouth and Portland	£1,314	£0
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>£3,682</b>	<b>£1,111</b>

#### **Cabinet Members**

- 4.16. We were made aware that the Leader is considering increasing the Cabinet size by 2 Members. Whilst we acknowledge that this has budget implications, we feel that the current allowance for a Cabinet Member is appropriate.

### **5. Members' Training Budget**

- 5.1. Whilst the Members' training budget falls outside of the remit of the IRP, this was raised during the consultation process and so we deemed it appropriate to make a recommendation on the matter.
- 5.2. Whilst we appreciate that Members are offered training as part of the induction programme, we discussed the importance of Members having access to on-going training and felt that the current budget for Member development (£5000) was too low. We acknowledged that Members of the Planning and Licensing Committee are required to attend initial mandatory and on-going training in order to sit on the committee, however, feel it is imperative that all Members have access to the necessary training in order to correctly interpret the relevant plans and policies when making a

decision at committee. We deliberated on how much to increase the budget by, but concluded that any requests for additional training should be accommodated wherever reasonably possible. We also considered individual training budgets, but felt that there was greater merit in having an overall training budget as many external courses offered couldn't be funded by individual budgets.

**Recommendation: That consideration be given to increasing the Members' training budget in order to equip Members with the knowledge and expertise required to undertake their role.**

## **6. Travel and Subsistence**

- 6.1. We noted from comments received in response to the questionnaires that relatively few claims are made by Members for the reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs. We are satisfied that the provisions in the scheme are sufficiently detailed and provide clear information and instructions on the different types of expenses that can be claimed. However, a suggestion was made to enable Members to submit the travel claim form electronically. We agree that digitalising the form will streamline the process for both Members and officers, however, also wish to retain the ability to submit the form in hard copy for those who do not have access to a computer.

**Recommendation: That consideration be given to providing Members with the facility to submit the travel claim form electronically.**

## **7. Dependents' Carers Allowance**

- 7.1. Through the consultation process, several Members highlighted that they were unaware of the dependent carers' allowance scheme. We therefore wanted to take this opportunity to remind Members that they may claim and receive a DCA where he/she has incurred expenditure on engaging a carer for a dependant in order to attend designated meetings and/or carry out approved duties. Subject to the conditions set out in section 7 of the scheme, the DCA shall be payable for the actual cost of providing care, with no maximum amount, subject to compliance with audit procedures put in place by the Council. We consider that it is important to encourage eligible Councillors take advantage of the financial assistance that is legitimately available to support them in the performance of their approved Council duties.

## **8. Date of next review**

- 8.1. As per national legislation, the next full review of the Members allowance scheme will take place in 2023. However, as set out in the scheme, in September of each intervening year, the Democratic Services Team Leader will liaise with the Chair of the IRP to agree any proposed changes to the allowances and decide if there are any issues which require the panel to meet. Any subsequent recommendations will again need to be considered by Council.