

# **The Welland Partnership Members Remuneration Panel**

## Report to South Kesteven District Council Meeting

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1. This Report has been prepared by the Independent Panel set up to make recommendations and provide guidance to the Council in respect of its scheme for Members' allowances.
  
- 1.2. The Report sets out the Panel's recommendations for the Council's consideration.

### **2. Framework**

- 2.1. The Local Government (Members' Allowances) 2003 Regulations put in place a consolidated and simplified framework for allowances that covers Principal Councils and Parish and Town Councils.
  
- 2.2. Part 4 of the Regulations makes provision for the establishment of an Independent Panel to make recommendations concerning allowances, travel and subsistence provision. The Welland Remuneration Panel, comprising John Cade (Chair), Ian Davis and Gordon Wells is compliant with the necessary arrangements.
  
- 2.3. A Council is unable to revoke or amend its scheme of allowances without first considering the recommendations of an Independent Panel. Whilst the Council is not bound by the recommendations of the Panel, there is a duty placed upon it to consider the recommendations, publish the Panel's recommendations and publish its Scheme.

2.4. Essentially, legislation provides that Local Authorities' Schemes of Allowances:

- Must make provision for a Basic Allowance, payable to all Members
- May make provision for Special Responsibility Allowances
- May include provision for payment of travel and subsistence expenses
- May include provision for Co-optee Allowances
- May make provision for Carers' Allowances

2.5. Government guidance on the scheme has generally become more relaxed. There are, however, three constraints on the Panel's work which it is important to highlight.

- Attendance Allowances are prohibited.
- The Basic Allowance must be paid equally to all Members.
- Where one or more Groups on a Council form an Administration, a Special Responsibility Allowance must be paid to a Member of the Opposition – usually paid to the Leader of the Opposition.

2.6. Allowances can be backdated to the beginning of the financial year.

2.7. For the avoidance of doubt the Council has also adopted the good practice that only one Special Responsibility Allowance can be claimed.

3. Our way of working

3.1. As with our previous reviews for your Council, we are always keen to hear from as many Councillors as possible on the

scope of the allowances scheme. There is rarely a consensus of view – some Councillors emphasising the voluntary nature of the role with others believing there is a need for better remuneration. We need to be aware of these opinions in conjunction with the comparative information we look at from neighbouring and similar sized Councils.

- 3.2. Our Panel comprising John Cade (Chair), Ian Davis and Gordon Wells met to take evidence on Monday 17th November 2025.
- 3.3. Over the course of the day we met, in person, with Councillors Ashley Baxter, Virginia Moran, Nikki Manterfield and Ian Selby together with your Chief Executive, Karen Bradford.
- 3.4. We also received email contributions from twenty other Councillors.
- 3.5. We were also made aware that the Reform UK Group had submitted a motion to the Council on a reduction in Special Responsibility Allowances but we received no evidence to support this proposition.
- 3.6. We are very grateful to all those who gave us evidence. This is vital for us to gain an understanding of the context for our review.
- 3.7. The other key component to our work is to examine how South Kesteven's allowances compare with neighbouring and similar sized Authorities.

- 3.8. We are very grateful here for the comparative information provided to us by James Welbourn (Democratic Services Manager). The comparator Councils were: North Kesteven, Boston, City of Lincoln, East Lindsey, South Holland, Braintree, East Hampshire, Tonbridge and Malling, Waverley and West Lancashire.
- 3.9. James also provided us with excellent support throughout the process. Lucy also ably assisted us with some note taking.

#### 4. Context

- 4.1. As a Panel we have been involved in reviewing your allowances for many years.
- 4.2. In our review of 2017, we acknowledged that Members were taking a more prominent role in the performance and promotion of the Council. This resulted in us recommending (and you agreeing at your Council meeting) increases in your allowances.
- 4.3. This meant that, in comparative terms with Councils of similar demographics and budgets, your allowances were nearly always in the top quartile.
- 4.4. Following our last review of March 2022 you agreed, at your Council meeting in May 2022, for reasons that we fully understand, “in the current economic climate, not to accept any increase in the Basic Allowance or Special Responsibility Allowances received by Councillors”.

4.5. In so far as the Special Responsibility Allowances were concerned this affected the Chairmen of Planning, Governance and Audit, Licensing and Employment Committees.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. BASIC ALLOWANCE

5.1.1. The basic allowance is a particularly important allowance for two reasons. The first is that it is received by all Councillors. The second, that it is the building block for your Special Responsibility Allowances which are determined as a multiple of it.

5.1.2. Your current Basic Allowance is £6,735 and we believe this is appropriate.

### 5.2. SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES

#### 5.2.1. Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members

We believe the current factors of 3.5, 2.75 and 2.00 of Basic Allowance respectively remain appropriate.

#### 5.2.2. Planning Committee Chairman

We received good evidence that the current Special Responsibility Allowance is out of kilter with other allowances given the responsibility placed on this post. The Planning Committee is a quasi-judicial body. There are also a number of significant planning applications in the pipeline that will be very complex and contentious over the next few years.

Consequently, we believe the factor of the Basic Allowance should increase from 0.90 to 1.20.

### 5.2.3. Governance and Audit Committee Chairman

We again received evidence that the allowance for this post should be increased. The Committee plays a pivotal role in the good governance arrangements for the Council and is also the key link with both District Audit and Internal Audit.

Consequently, we believe the factor of the Basic Allowance should increase from 0.67 to 1.00.

### 5.2.4. Licensing Committee Chairman

Once again, we believe that, looking across the Council's comparative allowances, there is a case for an increase in this allowance.

We believe the factor of the Basic Allowance should increase from 0.55 to 0.80.

### 5.2.5. Employment Committee Chairman

You have given to your Employment Committee a wider range of responsibilities than is usually the case in other Authorities.

We believe the factor of the Basic allowance should increase from 0.55 to 0.80.

### 5.2.6. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman

For good governance under a "Strong Leader" model it is important to have an effective scrutiny function.

We understand that since our last review you have increased the number of Scrutiny Committees from four to five. Whilst this seems a comparatively large number of Committees for

your size of Authority, the evidence we received was that they were working effectively and productively.

We believe the Special Responsibility Allowance is appropriately set as a factor of 1.00 of the Basic Allowance.

#### 5.2.7. Opposition Allowances

And, as for scrutiny, so for Opposition Allowances. Opposition Members need to provide effective challenge.

We believe that the current Special Responsibility Allowance as a factor of 1.00 of the Basic Allowance, shared on a pro-rata basis according to the numerical size of the Groups should remain.

#### 5.2.8. Standards Committee

At your request, in July 2023, we undertook a “mini review” to look at two issues, one of which was an allowance for your newly established Standards Committee.

We believe that the allowance we recommended of a factor of 0.40 of the Basic Allowance for the Chairman should, in the light of the evidence we received, be increased to a factor of 0.60 of the Basic allowance. Whilst activity had been restricted by flux around the position of Monitoring Officer, the responsibility of this role needs to be reflected in the allowance.

#### 5.2.9. Chairman of Council

We were asked to consider a Special Responsibility Allowance for the role of Chairman of the Council. Hither to the

Chairman (and Vice-Chairman) have received expenses from Council funding to meet costs associated with the ceremonial role of the post.

It has been our practice to recognise that the role of chairing the Council meeting with its associated preparation and follow-up deserves to be recognised by a Special Responsibility Allowance.

Chairing a Council meeting is a demanding task, crucial to the conducting of business and the reputation of the Council.

We will therefore recommend that the post attracts a Special Responsibility Allowance of a factor of 1.20 of Basic Allowance.

In making this recommendation we also expect the Council to continue to make separate provision for the expenses connected with the Chairman's ceremonial duties.

#### 5.2.10. Vice Chairman

We believe that the Special Responsibility allowance for Vice Chairmen should remain at 0.33 of the Special Responsibility Allowance for their respective Chairman.

#### 5.3. Independent Person (Standards) Allowance

We will recommend that the current payment of £1,500pa should now be index-linked in the same way as Councillor allowances.

#### 5.4. Childcare and Carers' Allowance

This is a very important allowance if Councils are to ensure that people with caring responsibilities are able to fully participate in meetings of the Council. It needs also to be stressed that it is not just for childcare but also for care of independent adults.

#### 5.5. Travel and Subsistence Allowances

Like most councils you currently have a car allowance rate of 45p per mile which is based on the HMRC rate to avoid the paying of tax or national insurance contributions.

We were also asked if it was possible to claim more if, to save overall costs, a lift was given to a fellow councillor attending a Council meeting.

We can advise that drivers carrying fellow employees on a business journey can receive an additional 5p per mile, per passenger, tax free.

We also believe that there should be a motorcycle allowance of 24p per mile and a bicycle allowance of 20p per mile, both of which would be tax free.

#### 5.6. Index-Linking

We believe you should continue to index link allowances to any pay awards made to your District Council employees. This not only makes some attempt to match inflation but also avoids the need for periodic "catch-up" lump sum proposals which are much more difficult for the public to relate to their own circumstances.

## 5.7. Financial Implications

These will be affected by your decisions as to the timings of any of our recommendations.

The financial implications of our proposals are shown in the Appendix to our report.

## 6. Recommendations

- 6.1. That the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances for the Leader, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Members, Overview and Scrutiny Chairs, together with the Opposition Allowance, remain the same.
- 6.2. That the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Planning Committee Chairman be increased to a factor of 1.20 of the Basic Allowance.
- 6.3. That the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Governance and Audit Committee Chairman be increased to a factor of 1.00 of the Basic Allowance.
- 6.4. That the Special Responsibility allowance for the Licensing Committee Chairman be increase to a factor of 0.80 of the Basic Allowance.
- 6.5. That the Special Responsibility allowance for the Employment Committee Chairman be increased to a factor of 0.80 of the Basic Allowance.
- 6.6. That a new Special Responsibility Allowance be provided for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council in recognition

of their responsibility around chairing the Council meeting. This should be set as a factor of 1.20 of the Basic Allowance for the Chairman with the Vice-Chairman receiving 0.33 of that allowance.

- 6.7. That the Vice-Chairman of a Committee continues to receive 0.33 of the Special Responsibility Allowance for the respective Chairman.
- 6.8. That any revised or introduced allowance be backdated to the start of the municipal year.
- 6.9. That allowances continue to be index-linked to any pay award to your Council employees.
- 6.10. That the payment to the Independent Person (Standards) be index-linked.
- 6.11. That the childcare and careers' allowances be the national living wage per hour with no cap.
- 6.12. That the travel and allowances scheme be amended to provide for an additional 5p per mile, per passenger when the driver is carrying fellow Councillors on a business journey.
- 6.13. That motorcycle allowance of 24p per mile and a bicycle allowance of 20p per mile be introduced.

J. Cade

Chair, Welland Partnership Members Remuneration Panel

1/12/2025