



Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

**Report of the Independent
Remuneration Panel
on the Review of Members' Allowances for the
2024/2025 Financial Year**

for

Cherwell District Council

February 2024

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Summary and Recommendations

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel (“the Panel”) has carried out a full review of the Cherwell District Council Members’ Allowances Scheme (“The Scheme”). This report sets out the Panel’s recommendations.
- 1.2 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 specifically Regulation 19 provide that before an authority makes or amends a scheme of allowances, the authority shall have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by an independent remuneration panel. The Council is required to have regard to the advice of the Panel on the levels and types of allowances to be paid under the Scheme.
- 1.3 In 2023/2024, the Panel recommended that the Basic Allowance and all Special Responsibility Allowances be increased by 2.75% (rounded up to give 12 equal payments) effective from 1 April 2023, in line with the staff cost of living award. This was agreed by Full Council on 27 February 2023.
- 1.4. In reaching its recommendations for the 2024/2025 Members’ Allowance Scheme, the Panel has carefully considered all of the submissions and representations made to it and the additional evidence that was available. In accordance with the Panel’s terms of reference, it has looked at the relevant elements of the Council’s existing Members’ Allowance Scheme.
- 1.5 The Panels continues to consider that the increasing complexity, additional responsibilities and burden of local government make it imperative for individuals representing all sections of society to be able to stand for election as councillors.
- 1.6 The Panel believes that this review of the Scheme and the recommendations it has made will give the Council a sound and comprehensive scheme of allowances until it is reviewed again.
- 1.7 The Panel thanked the Democratic and Elections Team who advised and supported the Panel for the information provided to assist in their work.
- 1.8 The Panel thanked Members for completing the Annual Members’ Allowance Survey which saw a significant increase in responses to the survey compared to last year.

2.0 Recommendations to Council

Having given due consideration to the information provided to the Panel, it recommends Full Council agree the following for inclusion in the Members' Allowance Scheme 2024/2025:

(To note: Any councillor who stands down or is not re-elected at the local elections on 2 May 2024 will remain on the council's payroll until the cost of living increase is agreed to ensure they are paid the increase for the period they were a councillor (1 April – 7 May 2024 inclusive).

- (a) That the Basic Allowance be increased in line with the 2024/2025 staff pay award (percentage) when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and payment of the increase backdated to 1 April 2024.

	Current Level 2023/24	2024/2025
Basic Allowance	£4,836 pa	£4,836 pa plus staff pay award (percentage), when agreed, added and rounded up to give 12 equal payments

- (b) That all Special Responsibility Allowances be increased in in line with the 2024/2025 staff pay award (percentage) when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and payment of the increase backdated to 1 April 2024.

Special Responsibility Allowance	Current Level 2023/2024	2024/2025 (All amounts listed below will have the staff pay award (percentage), when agreed, added and rounded up to give 12 equal payments)
Chairman of the Council	£4,836 pa	£4,836 pa
Leader of the Council	£15,408 pa	£15,408 pa
Deputy Leader of the Council	£9,936 pa	£9,936 pa
Executive Members holding a Portfolio	£7,188 pa	£7,188 pa
Leader of the Main Opposition Group	£3,324 pa	£3,324 pa

Chairman of Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee	£3,996 pa	£3,996 pa
Chairman of Appeals Panel	£288 SRA plus £288 per meeting to a capped limit of £1728 per annum	£288 SRA plus £288 per meeting to a capped limit of £1728 per annum
Chairman of Budget Planning Committee	£3,996 pa	£3,996 pa
Chairman of Licensing Committee	£852 pa	£852 pa
Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	£3,996 pa	£3,996 pa
Chairman of Personnel Committee	£1,428 pa	£1,428 pa
Chairman of Planning Committee	£4,788 pa	£4,788 pa
Chairman of Standards Committee	£852 pa	£852 pa

- (c) That a new Special Responsibility Allowance be introduced for Minority Opposition Group Leaders from April 1 2024, based on the following criteria::
- Group Leader of a minority opposition Group with 2 – 5 Members: 25% of the Main Opposition Group Leader SRA (if required, rounded up to 12 equal payments)
 - Group Leader of a minority opposition Group with 6 or more members: 50% of the Main Opposition Group Leader SRA (if required, rounded up to 12 equal payments)
- (d) That the co-optees allowance be increased in line with the staff pay award for 2024/2025 (percentage), when agreed, and rounded up to give 12 equal payments and payment of the increase backdated to 1 April 2024.

	Current Level 2023/24	2024/2025
Co-optee Allowance	£828 pa	£828 pa plus staff pay award (percentage), when agreed, added and rounded up to give 12 equal payments

- (e) That Independent Persons allowance be increased in line with the staff pay award for 2024/2025 (percentage), when agreed, and rounded up to give 12 equal payments, and payment of the increase backdated to 1 April 2024.

	Current Level 2023/24	2024/2025
Independent Persons Allowance	£828 pa	£828 pa plus staff pay award (percentage), when agreed, added and rounded up to give 12 equal payments

- (f) That Dependents' Carers' and Childcare Allowances remain at the current level, are paid on the basis of the actual costs incurred up to the maximum hourly rate set out below and to a maximum cap of 40 hours per month, subject to production of receipts and cannot be paid to a member of the claimant's household:

	Current Level 2023/2024	Proposed level for 2024/2025
Childcare	£10 per hour	£10 per hour
Dependent Relative Care	£20 per hour	£20 per hour

- (g) That mileage remain at the current level in line with HMRC approved mileage rates, and if any adjustments are implemented by HMRC then the revised rates should be applied to Members' travel allowances effective from the date of implementation by HMRC.

	Current level 2023/2024	Proposed level for 2024/2025
Bicycles	20p per mile	20p per mile
Motorcycles	24p per mile	24p per mile
Motor Vehicles	45p per mile	45p per mile
Electric and specialised vehicles	45p per mile	45p per mile

- (h) That there be no change to subsistence allowances payable up to the following amounts:

Subsistence	Rate 2023/2024	Proposed Rate 2024/2025
Breakfast Allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal	£6.02	£6.02

place of residence before 11am)		
Lunch Allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence including the lunchtime between 12noon and 2pm)	£8.31	£8.31
Evening Meal Allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence ending after 7pm)	£10.29	£10.29

- (i) That Democratic Services continue to book overnight accommodation if required.
- (j) That there be no change to the list of approved duties for which claims may be made.
- (k) That Non-Executive Director allowances be increased in line with the staff pay award for 2024/205, rounded up to give 12 equal payments, and payment of the increase backdated to 1 April 2024 and costs recharged to the relevant company.

	Current Level 2023/2024	Proposed level for 2024/2025
Non-Executive Directors Graven Hill Village Holding Company Limited and Graven Hill Village Development Company Limited	£4,788	£4,788 plus staff pay award (percentage), when agreed, added and rounded up to give 12 equal payments

The Panel's Report

3.0 Introduction

3.1 The Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003 require local authorities to review their Allowances Schemes and to maintain the Panel to consider and make recommendations on new schemes.

3.2 The Regulations set out that the following issues are to be addressed by the Panel:

- **Basic Allowance:** each local authority must make provision for a basic, flat rate allowance for all elected Members. The allowance must be the same for all Members and can either be paid in a lump sum or in instalments.
- **Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA):** each local authority may make provision for the payment of SRAs to elected Members who have significant responsibilities. The Panel has to recommend the responsibilities that should be remunerated and the levels of allowance.
- **Co-optees' Allowance:** each local authority may make provision for the payment of an allowance to co-optees' for attending meetings, conferences, and seminars
- **Childcare and dependents' carers' allowance:** each local authority may make provision for the payment of an allowance to elected Members who incur expenditure for the care of children or dependent relatives whilst undertaking particular duties
- **Travel and subsistence:** each local authority may determine the levels of travel and subsistence allowances and the duties to which they should apply
- **Indexation:** each local authority may determine that allowances should be increased in accordance with a specified index and can identify the index and set the number of years (not exceeding four) for which it should apply
- **Backdating:** each local authority may determine that, where allowances are made to an allowance scheme, the allowances as amended may be backdated.

3.3 All Councils are required to convene their Panel and seek its advice before they make any changes or amendments to their Members' Allowances Scheme. Elected Members must "have regard" to their Panel's recommendations before setting a new or amended Members' Allowance Scheme.

- 3.4 Following the meeting of the Independent and Parish Remuneration Panel in November 2022, the Panel recommended to Council that the Members' Basic Allowance and all Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) be increased by 2.75%, rounded up to give 12 equal payments, from 1 April 2023. This amount was in line with the cost of living increase awarded to staff from 1 April 2023. The Panel also recommended a new SRA for the Chairman of Council and fixed SRAs for the respective Licensing Committee, Personnel Committee and Standards Committee Chairmen
- 3.5 All of the Panel's recommendations were considered and agreed by Full Council on 27 February 2023. The 2023/2024 Scheme took effect on 1 April 2023 and has remained in force since this date.
- 3.6 This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003 (as amended). It outlines the Panel's findings following a review of the District Council's current Allowance Scheme and its recommendations for 2024/2025 in respect of:
- i. the levels of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)
 - ii. An SRA for Minority Opposition Group Leaders
 - iii. Any adjustments or changes to levels of any other SRAs
 - iv. Co-optees Allowance
 - v. Independent Persons allowance
 - vi. Travelling (mileage) allowances
 - vii. Subsistence allowances
 - viii. Dependents' carers' and childcare allowances
 - ix. Non-Executive Directors on Council Owned Companies
 - x. Review of the Members' Allowances Scheme and Indexation
- 3.7 For information, all year references throughout this report, 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 refer to the financial year. "Members" and "councillor" is used interchangeably throughout the report,

4.0 The Independent Remuneration Panel

4.1 The current membership of the Panel is:

Ms Jeanette Baker
Mr Andrew Hodges
Mr David Shelmerdine
Mr Christopher White

4.2 The Panel met on 4 December 2023 to consider and agree its recommendations for 2024/2025 financial year.

4.3 Mr Andrew Hodges was appointed as Chairman of the Panel.

4.4 Shahin Ismail, Interim Legal Services Manager and Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer, Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager, and Matthew Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer, provided the Panel with administrative advice and support.

5.0 Terms of Reference of the Panel

5.1 The Panel's terms of reference as originally agreed by the Council when the Panel was first constituted (as amended by the 2003 Consolidating Regulations which relate to the determination of local schemes for travelling and subsistence allowance) are outlined in its reports dated 3 July 2001 and 4 July 2003.

5.2 The principal matters on which the Panel can make recommendations are set out in the introduction of this report. As the Panel currently meets annually to review the Scheme and make recommendations for the forthcoming financial year, indexation is not currently applied to the allowance scheme.

5.3 It is possible for the Council to apply indexation and for the Scheme to be confirmed on that basis annually for a period of up to four years. In this instance, Council would need to amend the Terms of Reference of the Independent Remuneration Panel that currently state it meets annually and to agree any level of indexation such as any annual pay award to staff.

6.0 The Panel's Adopted Approach

6.1 Since 2001, the Panel's approach has been that recommendations should be formulated appropriate to the circumstance of the Council, recognizing that the roles of Executive and Non-Executive Members are now well-established.

6.2 The following underlying principles continue to form the basis of the Panel's review process:

- i. the allowances should take account, as far as possible, of the amount of time taken by Members to fulfil their roles.
- ii. the scheme should ensure, as far as practicable, that as wide a range of people as possible should be able to stand for election and that they should not be financially penalized in so doing. This, in turn, should increase the likelihood of an inclusive approach to council services.
- iii. the levels of the allowances should not be treated as salary but rather as a level of 'compensation' and recognition of the time and level of responsibility that such public duty requires.
- iv. that an element of Members' time in terms of their work as a Councillor should be treated as voluntary and therefore should not be remunerated.
- v. the assumption that all Members will participate as fully as possible in Council business and play an active role in their Wards and that the importance of these mutually inclusive roles should be reflected in the level of the basic allowance.
- vi. the reviewed scheme should take account of the payments included in the current scheme and any increases which might be recommended should be balanced against the interests of the residents in the District, although we accept that the Council must consider the political implications of the levels of the allowances open to it to pay.
- vii. the reviewed Scheme should continue to be subject to well informed periodic reviews.

7.0 The Work of the Panel

7.1 The Panel had previously determined the underlying principles on which the levels of Members' Allowances should be based, as outlined at paragraph 4.2 above.

7.2 The Panel's approach required an assessment of the amount of time Councillor's commit to their duties and their associated workloads in the context of the identified special responsibilities for Executive Members, Committee Chairmen, the Council Chairman and Opposition Group Leaders. It is important to highlight that the focus of the review is on the roles rather than the individuals who occupy them.

7.3 The Panel was aware of the responsibilities and workloads of Executive members with their specific portfolios.

- 7.4 The Panel noted the additional workload and complexity in the role of the Leader of the Council in leading the political direction of the Council, considerable responsibility for delivering the Council's budget and policy framework and steering the partnership dimension of the Council.
- 7.5 The Panel also had regard to the roles of the Chairman of the Council and Committee Chairmen and Opposition Group Leaders.
- 7.6 As part of its review, the Panel considered the following information which informed its conclusions:
- i. a copy of the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023/2024
 - ii. a comparison of neighbouring authority Members' Allowances
 - iii. comparative data from the Members' Allowances survey undertaken by South East Employers which outlines the basic, special responsibility and other allowance payments made by Council's in the South East Region
 - iv. the overall financial position of the Council
 - v. the general economic climate
 - vi. any recent changes in the roles, responsibilities, and workload of specific Member post
 - vii. a summary of Members' responses to the Annual Survey (further details of the survey are set out in section 6)
 - viii. any additional comments Members wished to make in respect of the current allowance scheme
 - ix. the discussions with the Members who spoke to the Panel
 - x. the increase in cost of living and level of CDC staff pay awards. As local negotiations for the annual staff pay award had not concluded for 2024/2025, this information was not available for the Panel on the meeting date.

8.0 Members' Allowance Scheme Annual Survey

- 8.1 The Panel continues to place great importance on the information gathered by way of the Annual Survey. The purpose of the Annual Survey is to determine:

- i. the amount of time Members estimate they spend on Council business during an average month
 - ii. Members views on the adequacy, or otherwise, of the current levels of Members' Allowances at the Council; and
 - iii. whether Members would like to address the Panel in person.
- 8.2 The Annual Survey had been circulated to all 48 elected Members. 34 surveys were returned, which represents 70% of the Council's membership.
- 8.3 The Panel was very grateful to those Members who responded to the survey and extremely pleased at the high level of responses. The Panel agreed to repeat the exercise again as it firmly believes that the information requested was vital to its effort in undertaking proper and meaningful review.
- 8.4 Results from questions 1 – 4 of the 34 surveys received were as follows:

Question 1 – How long have you been a Councillor?

- Less than 1 year 8
- 1 – 4 years 12
- 4 – 8 years 3
- 8 – 12 years 4
- Over 12 years 7

Question 2 – What is your current role?

- Leader of the Council/Leader of Opposition/Group leader 3
- Deputy Leader of the Council Deputy Leader of Opposition/Deputy Group Leader 3
- Chairman/Vice Chairman of the Council 0
- Executive Member 5
- Committee Chairman/Vice Chairman 6
- None of the above 15
- Prefer not to say 2

Question 3 – What is your employment status?

- Retired or otherwise not employed 6
- Employed full time 14
- Employed part time / self-employed 4
- Other 10

Question 4 - How many hours do you spend on Council work each month?

- 0 hours 1
- 5 hours 1
- 10 hours 1
- 15 hours 3
- 20 hours 5
- 25 hours 2
- 30 hours 1
- 35 hours 1
- 40 hours 8
- 45 hours 2
- 50 hours 4
- 60 hours 1
- 70 hours 2
- 80 hours 1
- 100 hours 2

8.5 Questions 5 – 9 sought comments from Members on the level of basic allowance, SRA, travel, subsistence, childcare and dependents' carers' allowances, time commitment and voluntary aspects of time given and any additional comments.

- (a) Nineteen of the respondents receive an SRA and fourteen of the respondents considered that an average of 21 hours per month related to the post for which the SRA was received. Five respondents that receive an SRA gave an answer of other.
- (b) Twenty-nine respondents considered that part of their time was given on a voluntary basis. Two assumed 50% of their time was on a voluntary basis.
- (c) With regards to the current rate of member allowances and the workload associated with the role and if it was thought to be adequate.
 - Twenty one Members thought that the allowance should be increased in line with any cost of living percentage changes in the CDC officer pay rates
 - Three thought it should be increased by an amount not linked to CDC officer cost of living pay awards.
 - Five considered the allowance should be frozen at the current level, and
 - Four thought that Members' Allowances should be assessed every 4 years and an automatic increase matching the staff annual cost of living pay award is applied
- (d) Ten respondents commented on current levels of Basic and Special Responsibility allowances as follows:
 - Given the inflation we have this year, we need an increase.

- It should not be a barrier to getting good councillors that need the allowance.
 - I think the council allowance is important so councillors can come from all walks of life
 - Can't justify any increases during the Conservative- created current cost of living crisis.
 - At a time when we can see far too many in the communities we represent struggling to pay for the most basic of things, struggling to even put food on the table, it would be unseemly and entirely wrong for councillors to take an increase their allowances. The community must come first.
 - I didn't even know there was an allowance before I started!
 - In current cost of living crisis an appropriate decision should be made
 - Given the inflation we have this year we need an increase
 - Like any other remuneration, Councillor Allowances should increase at least in line with other employees in the organisation.
 - The CDC Councillor's allowance is currently about 12% less than some of the Councils within Oxfordshire
- (e) With regards to Dependents' Carers' Allowance, Childcare Allowance, Travel and Subsistence Allowances, four respondents made the following comments:
- It is inadequate.
 - Travel allowance for motorcycles is far too low
 - These are incredibly important to ensure inclusion and should reflect the costs of being a councillor e.g., reflect increase in costs of childcare etc.
 - Travel caring allowances should go up
- (f) The following additional comments were made by eleven of the respondents:
- If we want councillors to commit to the job to the level then they should be compensated accordingly. There is a great deal of professional expertise and talent brought to the council by virtue of elected members and that should be acknowledged.
 - That care should be taken to compare our scheme with similar Districts.
 - If we are to attract a wider cross section of society into being councillors, the allowances need to be increased.
 - That there should be an allowance for both opposition party Leaders as they are both large oppositions
 - Councillors' allowances are antiquated across all tiers. They do not reflect the reality of working and family life.
 - Mileage allowance for a motorcycle should be the same as a car.

- Members' allowances do not usually account for the amount of time councillors spend on their roles. The issue is not so much being 'paid' for what we do but receiving an amount to compensate for not being able to do other things. While I agree that some of our time is voluntary, I am very concerned that many people are put off standing for office, or put off taking on special responsibilities, because they are unable to do so financially.
- If we are serious about inclusion and ensuring our council is representative, then it is important that we make sure that everyone can afford to be a councillor.

8.6 Five Members requested to address the Panel and two Members, Councillor Wood and Councillor Dallimore, were subsequently able to attend when the Panel's meeting was scheduled. Councillor Hingley was unable to attend but his comments were reported to the Panel by the Democratic and Elections Officer. The Panel thanked Councillor Wood, Councillor Dallimore and Councillor Hingley for their comments and contribution to the review.

9.0 Basic Allowance

9.1 The Panel considered the level of Basic Allowance. It is required in the relevant legislation that a Basic Allowance of the same value be provided to all members of the Council. The allowance is intended to remunerate councillors for their time spent as a councillor, covering incidental costs incurred by them as ordinary members of the Council, including the use of their homes.

9.2 In previous deliberations, the Panel has consistently used the annual pay settlement for Cherwell District Council (CDC) staff as one of their main considerations for recommending adjustment to the levels of the Basic and SRA paid to Members. At the time of meeting, there was no staff pay award agreed for 2024/2025. In the case of there being variation in the pay award depending on staff grades with either a fixed amount or percentage increase, the Panel noted that the percentage increase would be applied to Members' Allowances. This is in accordance with the National Joint Council Guidance which states that any "other" payments made, outside of the payscales, are subject to a percentage increase.

9.3 Having regard to the various calls on councillors' time, conscious that a proportion of time is voluntary, the levels of basic allowance paid by comparator councillors, and taking into particular consideration the current economic climate and the comments from the Members' survey:

The Panel recommends:

- (a) That the Basic Allowance be increased in in line with the 2024/2025 staff pay award (percentage) when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and payment of the increase backdated to 1 April 2024.

	Current Level 2023/24	2024/2025
Basic Allowance	£4,836 pa	£4,836 pa plus staff pay award (percentage), when agreed, added and rounded up to give 12 equal payments

10.0 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)

- 10.1 The Panel reviewed the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA).
- 10.2 In line with its recommendation to increase the Basic Allowance for 2024/2025, the Panel agreed that SRA should be increased on the same terms.
- 10.3 Having regard to the political make up of the Council and comments submitted in the survey and by Members who addressed the Panel, the Panel deliberated whether there should be an introduction of an SRA Minority Opposition Group Leaders.
- 10.4 The Panel noted that many neighbouring authorities include an SRA in their Members' Allowance Schemes and that there are varying criteria for payment of the allowance.
- 10.5 The Panel agreed that a new SRA should be introduced for Minority Opposition Group Leader(s). The amount paid should be a proportion of the main opposition Group Leader SRA and linked to the number of members in the political group.

The Panel recommends:

- (b) That all Special Responsibility Allowances be increased in in line with the 2024/2025 staff pay award (percentage) when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and payment of the increase backdated to 1 April 2024.

Special Responsibility Allowance	Current Level 2023/2024	2024/2025 (All amounts listed below are plus staff pay award (percentage), when

		agreed, added and rounded up to give 12 equal payments)
Chairman of the Council	£4,836 pa	£4,836 pa
Leader of the Council	£15,408 pa	£15,408 pa
Deputy Leader of the Council	£9,936 pa	£9,936 pa
Executive Members holding a Portfolio	£7,188 pa	£7,188 pa
Leader of the Main Opposition Group	£3,324	£3,324
Chairman of Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee	£3,996 pa	£3,996 pa
Chairman of Appeals Panel	£288 SRA plus £288 per meeting to a capped limit of £1728 per annum	£288 SRA plus £288 per meeting to a capped limit of £1728 per annum
Chairman of Budget Planning Committee	£3,996 pa	£3,996 pa
Chairman of Licensing Committee	£852	£852
Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	£3,996 pa	£3,996 pa
Chairman of Personnel Committee	£1,428	£1,428
Chairman of Planning Committee	£4,788 pa	£4,788 pa
Chairman of Standards Committee	£852	£852

- (c) That a new Special Responsibility Allowance be introduced for Minority Opposition Group Leaders from April 1 2024, based on the following criteria
- Group Leader of a minority opposition Group with 2 – 5 Members: 25% of the Main Opposition Group Leader SRA (if required, rounded up to 12 equal payments)
 - Group Leader of a minority opposition Group with over 6 or more members: 50% of the Main Opposition Group Leader SRA (if required, rounded up to 12 equal payments)

11.0 Co-optee Allowance

- 11.1 In considering co-optee allowance, the Panel noted that there are currently no co-optees but agreed a consistent approach to increase this allowance in line with the Basic Allowance and SRA's.

The Panel recommends:

- (d) That the co-optees allowance be increased in line with the staff pay award for 2024/2025 (percentage), rounded up to give 12 equal payments and payment of the increase backdated to 1 April 2024.

	Current Level 2023/24	2024/2025
Co-optee Allowance	£828 pa	£828 pa plus staff pay award (percentage), when agreed, added and rounded up to give 12 equal payments

12.0 Independent Persons Allowance

- 12.1 The Council currently has two Independent Persons, who support the Monitoring Officer with code of conduct matters and two Independent Persons who are non-voting members of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee.
- 12.2 The Panel agreed that a consistent approach to the increase this allowance in line with the increase for the Basic Allowance and SRAs.

The Panel recommends:

- (e) That the Independent Persons allowance be increased in line with the staff pay award for 2024/2025 (percentage), rounded up to give 12 equal payments and payment of the increase backdated to 1 April 2024.

	Current Level 2023/24	2024/2025
Independent Persons Allowance	£828 pa	£828 pa plus staff pay award (percentage), when agreed, added and rounded up to give 12 equal payments

13.0 Dependents' Carers' and Childcare Allowance

- 13.1 In considering the dependents' carers' and childcare allowances, the Panel noted that these allowances were claimed very infrequently but agreed that the availability of the allowances was extremely important to encourage those with families or care responsibilities to stand as a councillor.
- 13.2 The Panel agreed that the dependants' carers' and childcare allowance should be maintained with no change to the rates payable.
- 13.3 All conditions to claim the allowance would remain the same.

The Panel recommends:

- (f) That Dependents' Carers' and Childcare Allowances remain at the current level, are paid on the basis of the actual costs incurred up to the maximum hourly rate set out below and to a maximum cap of 40 hours per month, subject to production of receipts and cannot be paid to a member of the claimant's household:

	Current Level 2023/2024	Proposed level for 2024/2025
Childcare	£10 per hour	£10 per hour
Dependent Relative Care	£20 per hour	£20 per hour

14.0 Travelling and Subsistence Allowances

- 14.1 In reviewing the current level of Travelling and Subsistence Allowances, the Panel noted that all travel rates are set at the specified HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC) rates and consequently had no implications for the tax liabilities of Members. Travel rates for motorcycles and motor vehicles are paid regardless of the cc of motorcycle or motor vehicle concerned and remain the same. These rates remain unchanged.
- 14.2 In relation to Subsistence Allowances, the Panel had originally agreed that allowances should be paid up to the maximum rates notified by the National Joint Council for Officers index linked to the Retail Prices Index (including mortgages).
- 14.3 Since 1996 when the National Joint Council for Officers ceased to produce nationally agreed subsistence rate for local government staff, subsistence rates

have been a subject for local determination. The Council applies the Local Government Association rates.

- 14.4 As part of the 2023/2024 review, the Panel had received a request to add “ward attendance at formal Parish Council meetings” to the list of approved duties. This was not recommended at the time and no further evidence or requests received requesting that this be considered as part of the 2024/2025 review. The comparative information indicated that neighbouring authorities did not include this in their Scheme.
- 14.5 The Panel consequently agreed that there be no change to the list of approved duties. The Panel noted that the Scheme did allow for claims associated with activity not included on the list of approved duties to be approved and paid at the discretion of the Assistant Director Law and Governance.
- 14.6 Expenses incurred by councillors appointed as Non-Executive Directors of companies will continue to be paid at the same rate and recharged to the relevant company.

The Panel recommends:

- (g) That mileage remain at the current level in line with HMRC approved mileage rates and if any adjustments are implemented by HMRC then the revised rates should be applied to Members travel allowances at the date of implementation by HMRC.

	2022/2023	Proposed Level for 2023/2024
Bicycles	20p per mile	20p per mile
Motorcycles	24p per mile	24p per mile
Motor Vehicles	45p per mile	45p per mile
Electric or Specialised Vehicles	45p per mile	45p per mile

- (h) That there be no change to the subsistence allowances payable up to the following maximum amounts:

Subsistence	Rate 2022/2023	Proposed Rate 2023/2024
Breakfast Allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence before 11am)	£6.02	£6.02
Lunch Allowance	£8.31	£8.31

(more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence including the lunchtime between 12noon and 2pm)		
Evening Meal Allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence ending after 7pm)	£10.29	£10.29

- (i) That Democratic Services continue to book overnight accommodation, if required.
- (j) That there be no change to the list of approved duties for which claims may be made.

15.0 Non-Executive Directors on Council Owned Companies

- 15.1 In 2018 it was agreed that Members who were Non-Executive Directors (NED) of both Graven Hill Companies (Graven Hill Development Company Limited, (DEVCO) and Graven Hill Village Holdings Limited (HOLDCO)) should receive an allowance comparable to the Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the Planning Committee Chairman.
- 15.2 In line with the recommendations for SRA's, the Panel agreed to recommend a consistent increase to the NED allowance.
- 15.3 Allowances paid to NEDs are paid through Cherwell District Council and recharged to the companies.

The Panel recommends:

- (k) That Non-Executive Director allowances be increased in line with the staff pay award for 2024/2025 (percentage), rounded up to give 12 equal payments, and payment of the increase backdated to 1 April 2024 and costs recharged to the relevant company.

	Current Level 2023/2024	Proposed level for 2024/2025
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Non-Executive Directors Graven Hill Village Holding Company Limited and Graven Hill Village Development Company Limited	£4,788	£4,788 plus staff pay award (percentage) rounded up to give 12 equal payments
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16.0 Review of Members' Allowance Scheme and Indexation

- 16.1 As set out at paragraph 3.2, each local authority may determine that allowances should be increased in accordance with a specified index, can identify the index and set the number of years (not exceeding four) for which it should apply.
- 16.2 The Panel noted that a council can apply an index to their allowances in circumstances where the only change each year is the application of the index. Many authorities have adopted an indexed scheme whereby allowances are amended annually by the reference to the annual pay award for staff at that authority and takes effect from the date on which the staff award takes effect.
- 16.3 CDC does not currently have an indexed scheme, rather the Panel meets annually and makes recommendations to Council for consideration as part of the following years scheme.
- 16.4 In considering the introduction of an indexed scheme, the Panel acknowledged that, as with all of its recommendations, the decision on Members' Allowances and, alongside this, an indexation scheme, sits with Council but Members must have regard to the view of the Panel.
- 16.5 The Panel commented that transparency was a key and crucial element of its annual review. Were a four-year scheme with indexation to be agreed by Council, the independence of an annual review which ensures the scheme is fair for all would be lost and with the Panel meeting every year means that they can react quicker and be more proactive. The Panel agreed not to make a recommendation on indexation.

Mr Andrew Hodges (Chairman)
Independent Remuneration Panel
February 2024.