



***Cherwell***  
DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

**Report of the Independent  
Remuneration Panel  
on the Review of Members' Allowances for the 2026/2027 Financial Year**

**for**

**Cherwell District Council**

December 2025

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## Summary and Recommendations

### 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, require the Council to have regard to the recommendations of its own Independent Remuneration Panel (the "Panel"). This report sets out those recommendations for 2026/2027.
- 1.2 The Panel has carefully reviewed the existing Allowances Scheme ("the Scheme"), considered all of the submissions and representations made to it, and evaluated the additional evidence that was available.
- 1.3 The Panel continues to consider that the increasing complexity, additional responsibilities and burden of local government make it imperative that individuals from all sections of society should be able to stand for election as councillors. The Panel believes that its recommendations will help to facilitate this, and will provide the Council with a sound and comprehensive Scheme.
- 1.4 The panel thanked the Democratic and Elections Team for their advice and support, and thanked Councillors for completing their Annual Survey.
- 1.5 The terms "Member" and "Councillor" are used interchangeably throughout the report.

### 2.0 Recommendations to Council

For 2026/27, the Panel recommends that Full Council agree:

- (a) That the Basic Allowance be increased in line with the 2026/2027 staff pay award, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026 *(NB. Whilst the Panel's recommendations throughout are for an increase in line with the staff cost of living pay award, to give an indicative idea of cost and change, a 2.5% increase has been applied to the figures below for information)*:

|                 | Current level 2025/2026 | Indicative 2026/2027 level |
|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Basic Allowance | £5,220 pa               | £5,352 pa                  |

- (b) That the current combined Special Responsibility Allowance covering both the Chair of the Licensing Acts Committee and Chair of the General Licensing Committee end, and separate SRAs be introduced for the Chair of each Committee at the current combined SRA level.

- (c) That all Special Responsibility Allowances be increased in line with the 2026/2027 staff pay award, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026.

| <b>Special Responsibility Allowance</b>              | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b>                                      | <b>Indicative 2026/2027 level</b>                                   |
|--|---|---|
| Chair of the Council                                 | £5,220 pa   | £5,352 pa   |
| Leader of the Council                                | £16,596 pa  | £17,016 pa  |
| Deputy Leader of the Council                         | £10,716 pa  | £10,992 pa  |
| Executive Member holding a portfolio                 | £7,740 pa   | £7,944 pa   |
| Leader of Main Opposition Group                      | £3,600 pa   | £3,696 pa   |
| Minority Opposition Group Leader (6 or more Members) | 50% of Main Opposition Group Leader SRA                             | 50% of Main Opposition Group Leader SRA                             |
| Minority Opposition Group Leader (2-5 Members)       | 25% of Main Opposition Group Leader SRA                             | 25% of Main Opposition Group Leader SRA                             |
| Chair of Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee          | £4,320 pa   | £4,428 pa   |
| Chair of Appeals Panel                               | £312 SRA plus £312 per meeting to a capped limit of £1872 per annum | £324 SRA plus £324 per meeting to a capped limit of £1944 per annum |
| Chair of Budget Planning Committee                   | £4,320 pa   | £4,428 pa   |
| Chair of General Licensing Committee                 | £924 pa – single allowance for Chair of both GLC and LAC            | £948 pa   |
| Chair of Licensing Acts Committee                    |   | £948 pa   |
| Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee             | £4,320 pa   | £4,428 pa   |
| Chair of Personnel Committee                         | £1,548 pa   | £1,596 pa   |
| Chair of Planning Committee                          | £5,160 pa   | £5,292 pa   |

|                              |         |         |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Chair of Standards Committee | £924 pa | £948 pa |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|

- (d) That the co-optees allowance be increased in line with the staff pay award for 2026/2027, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026.

|                    | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b> | <b>Indicative 2026/2027 level</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Co-optee Allowance | £900 pa                        | £924 pa                           |

- (e) That Independent Persons allowance be increased in line with the staff pay award for 2026/2027, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026.

|                               | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b> | <b>Indicative 2026/2027 level</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Independent Persons Allowance | £900 pa                        | £924 pa                           |

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

|                         | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b> | <b>Proposed 2026/2027 level</b> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Childcare               | £10 per hour                   | £10 per hour                    |
| Dependant 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 be applied to Members' travel allowances effective from the date of implementation by HMRC.

|                 | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b> | <b>Proposed level for 2026/2027</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Bicycles        | 20p per mile                   | 20p per mile                        |
| Motorcycles*    | 24p per mile                   | 24p per mile                        |
| Motor Vehicles* | 45p per mile                   | 45p per mile                        |

|  |              |              |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| Electric or similar specialised vehicles | 45p per mile | 45p per mile |
|--|--------------|--------------|

(\*Motor vehicle and motorcycle rates apply whatever the cc of the vehicle concerned)

- (h) That the rates for subsistence allowance remain at the current level in line with the maximum staff subsistence levels, with claims permitted on approved duties of over 5 hours outside the district\*, subject to the submission of receipts (\*subsistence allowances cannot be claimed for any duties within the district as the basic allowance is deemed to cover all within district expenses).

|              | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b> | <b>Proposed 2026/2027 level</b> |
|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Breakfast    | £7.50                          | £7.50                           |
| Lunch        | £10.50                         | £10.50                          |
| Tea / coffee | £4.00                          | £4.00                           |
| Evening Meal | £12.50                         | £12.50                          |

- (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 for Members be increased in line with the staff pay award for 2026/2027, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026, and costs recharged to the relevant company:

|  | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b> | <b>Indicative 2026/2027 level</b> |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Members who are Non-Executive Directors<br>Graven Hill Village Holding Company Limited and Graven Hill Village Development Company | £5,160                         | £5,292                            |

## 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 an Independent Remuneration Panel.
- 3.2 The Regulations set out that a local authority must make provision for a basic, flat rate allowance for all elected Members. This allowance must be the same for all Members. It can either be paid in a lump sum or in instalments.
- 3.3 In addition, a local authority may make provision for:
- the payment of Special Responsibility Allowances for Councillors who have significant responsibilities. The Panel has to advise on the responsibilities that should be remunerated and the levels of allowance.
  - the payment of an allowance to co-optees' for attending meetings, conferences, and seminars.
  - a Childcare and Dependents' Carers' Allowance for Councillors who incur expenditure for the care of children or dependant relatives whilst undertaking particular duties.
  - the levels of travel and subsistence allowances and the duties to which they should apply.
  - allowance rates to be adjusted each year in accordance with a specified index, identifying the index and setting the number of years (not to exceed four) for which it should apply.
  - backdating of the allowances as amended.
- 3.4 All Councils are required to convene their Panel and seek its advice before they make changes or amendments to their Scheme. Councillors must "have regard" to the Panel's recommendations before setting a new or amended Scheme.
- 3.5 For 2025/2026, all of the Panel recommendations were agreed by [Full Council on 24 February 2025](#), and the staff pay award of 3.5% was applied to allowances with effect from [1 April 2025](#). This report outlines the conduct, findings and recommendations of this year's review.

## **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 26 November 2025 to consider and agree its recommendations for the 2026/2027 financial year.**

### **4.3 Mr Christopher White was appointed Chair of the Panel.**

### **4.4 Denzil Turbervill – Head of Legal Services, Natasha Clark - Governance and Elections Manager and Emma Faulkner - Principal Officer – Scrutiny & Democratic Lead (Clerk), provided the Panel with administrative advice and support. The Panel thanked the officers and the Principal Officer – Scrutiny and Democratic Lead in particular, for the comprehensive information provided to the Panel.**

### **4.5 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.**

## **5.0 The Panel's Approach**

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

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

- i. The assumption that all Members will participate as fully as possible in Council business and play an active role in their Wards and that this should be reflected in the level of the basic allowance.
- ii. The allowances should take account, as far as possible, of the amount of time taken by Members to fulfil their roles.
- iii. The scheme should enable a wide range of people to stand for election, and they should not be financially penalised in so doing.



- iv. The allowances should not be regarded as salary, but rather as a level of 'compensation', in recognition of the time and level of responsibility that such public duty requires.
- v. An element of Members' time should be treated as voluntary and should not therefore be remunerated.
- vi. The scheme should take account of the payments included in the current scheme and any possible increases should be balanced against the interests of the residents of the District, whilst the Council must consider the political implications of the levels of Allowances open to it to pay.
- vii. The scheme should continue to be subject to well informed periodic reviews.

## **6.0 The Work of the Panel**

- 6.1 The Panel's approach required an assessment of the amount of time councillors commit to their duties and their associated workloads, including any Special Responsibilities. However, it is important that the focus of the review should be on the roles, rather than on the individuals who occupy those roles.
- 6.2 The Panel noted the particular responsibilities and workloads of Executive Members and their specific portfolios.
- 6.3 The Panel also noted the additional workload and complexity in the role of the Leader of the Council in leading the political direction of the Council, with considerable responsibility for delivering the Council's budget and policy framework, and for steering the partnership dimension of the Council.
- 6.4 The Panel also recognised the responsibilities of the Chair of the Council, of Committee Chairs and of Opposition Group Leaders.
- 6.5 As part of its review, the Panel considered the following information which informed its conclusions and recommendations:
  - i. a copy of the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme for 2025/2026
  - ii. the Allowances Schemes of neighbouring authorities
  - iii. comparative data from South East Employers which outlines the basic, special responsibility and other allowance payments made by Councils in the South East Region

- iv. any recent changes in the roles, responsibilities, and workload of specific Member posts
- v. the responses to the Members' Allowance Survey
- vi. the discussions with the Members who spoke with the Panel
- vii. increases in the cost of living and level of CDC staff pay awards.
- viii. the overall financial position of the Council
- ix. the general economic climate

## **7.0 Annual Survey of Members**

7.1 The Panel places great importance on the information gathered by way of the Annual Survey of Councillors. It particularly helps 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 scheme; and
- iii. whether Members would like to address the Panel in person.

7.2 26 responses were received, 54% of Councillors. The detailed results of this year's Survey are provided in Annexe 1.

7.3 Overall, Members felt that the level of allowance was important in attracting people to the role of Councillor, and that an increase should be applied to bring the Cherwell scheme in line with other authorities in Oxfordshire.

7.4 Of the Members who requested to address the Panel, Councillors Kieron Mallon and Barry Wood were able to attend. The Panel appreciated their comments, and thanked them for their time.

## **8.0 Basic Allowance**

8.1 The Basic 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. The council provides laptops for councillors to allow seamless working with the council's systems and ensure data security. The Basic Allowance is deemed to cover other ICT equipment and

consumables councillors may choose to use e.g. printers, printer cartridges and paper.

8.2 The Panel has previously used the annual pay settlement for Cherwell District Council (CDC) staff as one of their main considerations when recommending adjustment to the levels of the Basic and SRAs paid to Members. It is proposed that this approach should be maintained.

8.3 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 line with the 2026/2027 staff pay award, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026.

|                 | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b> | <b>Indicative 2026/2027 level</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Basic Allowance | £5,220                         | £5,352                            |

**9.0 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)**

9.1 The Panel considered whether any additional SRAs should be introduced.

9.2 At last year's meeting, the Panel was advised that Full Council was due to consider changes to the Licensing Committee whereby two separate and distinct committees would be established pursuant to and to reflect relevant legislation. The proposals were subsequently approved by Full Council in December 2024, establishing a General Licensing Committee and a Licensing Acts Committee.

9.3 As part of its 2025/2026 review, the Panel had considered that the SRA for the existing Licensing Committee Chair should cover both newly established licensing committees as it was anticipated the Chair would be the same for both.

9.4 The General Licensing Committee and Licensing Acts Committee have been operating for a year. The Panel was asked to consider whether each Committee should have a separate SRA, as was the case for all other Committees.

- 9.5 The Panel noted that whilst the Chair of both the General Licensing Committee and Licensing Acts Committee was currently the same Councillor, it was not a Constitutional requirement and, therefore, in the future each Committee could have a different Chair. The Panel further noted that both Committees were meeting regularly, and would continue to do so, it would be appropriate to have separate SRAs. The SRA for each Chair should be at the level that was currently in place as a combined SRA for the Chair of both Committees.

**The Panel recommends:**

- (b) That the current combined Special Responsibility Allowance covering both the Chair of the Licensing Acts Committee and Chair of the General Licensing Committee end and separate SRAs be introduced for the Chair of each Committee at the current combined SRA level.
- 9.6 Regarding other roles that could attract an SRA, the Panel noted that four survey responses had commented that there should be an SRA for Planning Committee Members.
- 9.7 In considering an SRA for Planning Committee members, the Panel acknowledged that the Planning Committee workload could be perceived to be greater than other Committees having regard to the number of meetings, this could fluctuate depending on the number of planning applications submitted to each meeting. The Panel noted that Cherwell District Council operates a named substitute policy, and consideration would need to be given to how, when or if a substitute qualified for any SRA introduced.
- 9.8 Having regard to comparative seven neighbouring authorities allowance information, the Panel noted that whilst four had a Vice-Chair allowance, only one paid an allowance to Planning Committee members.
- 9.9 Furthermore, having regard to Local Government Reorganisation and new unitary authorities being established in due course, the Panel agreed that it was not appropriate to review an SRA for Planning Committee members at this time. The Panel commented that a review of Members' Allowances would be required for newly established unitary authorities and this could include consideration of an SRA for Planning Committee members.
- 9.10 The Panel also considered the SRA for the Leader of the Main Opposition Group. Following three District by-elections held in May 2025, there were two main opposition groups with the same number of Councillors. The Leader of each Group received the full Leader of the Main Opposition SRA.
- 9.11 Notwithstanding that the situation was no longer applicable and there was now a single Main Opposition Group following a Councillor changing political group, the Panel was asked to consider whether, if this situation occurred in the future,

the Leader of the Main Opposition SRA should be split between the relevant number of Main Opposition Group Leaders.

9.12 The Panel discussed and agreed that the approach that had been adopted in May 2025, with each Group Leader receiving the full Opposition Leader SRA, was fair and should be applied again in future if the same circumstance arose.

9.13 In line with its recommendation to increase the Basic Allowance:

**The Panel recommends:**

(c) That all Special Responsibility Allowances be increased in line with the 2026/2027 staff pay award, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026.

| <b>Special Responsibility Allowance</b>              | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b>                                      | <b>Indicative 2026/2027 level</b>                                   |
|--|---|---|
| Chair of the Council                                 | £5,220  | £5,352  |
| Leader of the Council                                | £16,596   | £17,016   |
| Deputy Leader of the Council                         | £10,716   | £10,992   |
| Executive Member holding a portfolio                 | £7,740  | £7,944  |
| Leader of Main Opposition Group                      | £3,600  | £3,696  |
| Minority Opposition Group Leader (6 or more Members) | 50% of Main Opposition Group Leader SRA                             | 50% of Main Opposition Group Leader SRA                             |
| Minority Opposition Group Leader (2-5 Members)       | 25% of Main Opposition Group Leader SRA                             | 25% of Main Opposition Group Leader SRA                             |
| Chair of Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee          | £4,320  | £4,428  |
| Chair of Appeals Panel                               | £312 SRA plus £312 per meeting to a capped limit of £1872 per annum | £324 SRA plus £324 per meeting to a capped limit of £1944 per annum |
| Chair of Budget Planning Committee                   | £4,320  | £4,428  |
| Chair of General Licensing Committee                 |   | £948  |

|  |   |        |
|--|---|--------|
| Chair of Licensing Acts Committee        | £924 pa – single allowance for Chair of GLC & LAC | £948   |
| Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee | £4,320  | £4,428 |
| Chair of Personnel Committee             | £1,548  | £1,596 |
| Chair of Planning Committee              | £5,160  | £5,292 |
| Chair of Standards Committee             | £924  | £948   |

## 10.0 Co-optee Allowance

- 10.1 In considering the co-optee allowance, the Panel noted that there were 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 2026/2027, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026.

|                    | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b> | <b>Indicative 2026/2027 level</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Co-optee Allowance | £900                           | £924                              |

## 11.0 Independent Persons Allowance

- 11.1 The Council currently has one Independent Person, who supports the Monitoring Officer with code of conduct matters, and one Independent Person who is a non-voting member of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee. The Panel was advised that recruitment had taken place and reports would be submitted to the December Council meeting to appoint a second Independent Person to support the Monitoring Officer and a second Independent Person to the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (non-voting)
- 11.2 The Panel agreed to 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 2026/2027, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026.

|                               | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b> | <b>Indicative 2026/2027 level</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Independent Persons Allowance | £900                           | £924                              |

**12.0 Dependants' Carers' and Childcare Allowance**

- 12.1 In considering the Dependants' 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 caring responsibilities to stand as a councillor.
- 12.2 The Panel agreed that the Allowance should be maintained with no change to the rates payable.
- 12.3 All conditions to claim the Allowance would remain the same.

**The Panel recommends:**

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

|                         | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b> | <b>Proposed 2026/2027 level</b> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Childcare               | £10 per hour                   | £10 per hour                    |
| Dependant relative care | £20 per hour                   | £20 per hour                    |

**13.0 Travelling and Subsistence Allowances**

- 13.1 The Panel noted that the Council's travel rates are set at HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC) levels, with consequently no implications for the tax liability of Members. The rates are paid regardless of the engine size of the vehicle. The rates remain unchanged by HMRC again this year. Should the rates change

during 2026/27, any change should be applied to the Members' Allowance Scheme.

- 13.2 The Panel noted that the Subsistence rates are aligned with the staff policy, following a review and revised Policy being agreed by the Personnel Committee in September 2024. The Panel agreed that the same maximum subsistence levels and restrictions on and requirements for claiming should continue to be applied to the Members' Allowance Scheme.
- 13.3 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 be applied to Members' travel allowances effective at the date of implementation by HMRC.

|  | <b>Current level<br/>2025/2026</b> | <b>Proposed level for<br/>2026/2027</b> |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Bicycles                                 | 20p per mile                       | 20p per mile                            |
| Motorcycles*                             | 24p per mile                       | 24p per mile                            |
| Motor Vehicles*                          | 45p per mile                       | 45p per mile                            |
| Electric or similar specialised vehicles | 45p per mile                       | 45p per mile                            |

(\*Motor vehicle and motorcycle rates apply whatever the cc of the vehicle concerned)

- (h) That the rates for subsistence allowance continue to be aligned with the revised maximum staff subsistence levels, with claims permitted on approved duties of over 5 hours outside the district\*, subject to the submission of receipts (\*subsistence allowances cannot be claimed for any duties within the district as the basic allowance is deemed to cover all within district expenses).

|              | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b> | <b>Proposed 2026/2027<br/>level</b> |
|--------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Breakfast    | £7.50                          | £7.50                               |
| Lunch        | £10.50                         | £10.50                              |
| Tea / coffee | £4.00                          | £4.00                               |
| Evening Meal | £12.50                         | £12.50                              |



- (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.

#### **14.0 Non-Executive Directors on Council Owned Companies**

- 14.1 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 Chair.
- 14.2 The Panel was advised that there were currently no councillors appointed to Graven Hill Companies. There was however one councillor appointed NED on the Council owned company, Crown House. NEDs appointed to Crown House do not receive an SRA.
- 14.3 Having regard to the differences between the two companies, the Panel confirmed that the current approach should continue, whereby councillors appointed as NEDs to Graven Hill companies received an SRA but councillors appointed to NEDs to Crown House do not.
- 14.4 The Panel requested that if large projects of a similar nature are undertaken in the future, they be informed to allow for consideration and recommendation, as appropriate, on SRAs for any councillor appointed NEDs.
- 14.5 In line with the recommendations for SRA's, the Panel agreed to recommend a consistent increase to the NED allowance.
- 14.6 Allowances paid to NEDs are paid through Cherwell District Council and recharged to the companies.

#### **The Panel recommends:**

- (k) That Non-Executive Director allowances for Members be increased in line with the staff pay award for 2026/2027, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026, and costs recharged to the relevant company.

|  | <b>Current level 2025/2026</b> | <b>Indicative 2026/2027 level</b> |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Members who are Non-Executive Directors<br>Graven Hill Village | £5,160                         | £5,292                            |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Holding Company<br>Limited and Graven Hill<br>Village Development<br>Company |  |  |
|--|--|--|

## **15.0 Annual Review and Indexation**

- 15.1 The Panel noted that in any Scheme, a council can specify an index to be applied to their allowance rates each year (up to a maximum of four years). Many authorities have adopted this approach, and have agreed to amend allowances each year by reference to the annual pay award for staff at their authority, to take effect from the same date as the staff award.
- 15.2 Cherwell District Council does not currently have an indexed scheme. Rather the Panel meets annually to consider any changes which may have been made to the structure of the Council, or to consider roles and responsibilities. The Panel then makes tailored recommendations to Council for consideration as part of the following year's scheme.

## **16.0 Other Matters for Information**

- 16.1 As part of its review for the 2025/26 Scheme, the Panel had recommended an in-depth "root and branches" review of the Members' Allowance Scheme be undertaken, with implementation of a revised scheme alongside changes arising from a Cherwell District Council boundary review.
- 16.2 In light of the Government's programme for Local Government Reorganisation, the Cherwell boundary review is no longer taking place. Notwithstanding, the Panel considered it important for an annual review of CDC Members' allowances to be undertaken.
- 16.3 The Panel noted that, following the establishment of new unitary authorities, a review of Members' Allowances would be required for each new council(s) in Oxfordshire.
- 16.4 The Government is currently consulting on proposals to restore access for councillors in England to the LGPS. Councillors in England have been unable to join the LGPS since 1 April 2014.
- 16.5 A draft set of regulations had been published alongside the consultation, which set out that elected members would not be subject to an auto-enrolment but will be an automatic right.

- 16.6 Whilst noting this was outside their remit, the Panel acknowledged the consultation, and commented that the proposed change was a positive move for Councillors.

Mr Christopher White (Chair)  
Independent Remuneration Panel  
December 2025.

On behalf of  
Ms Jeanette Baker  
Mr Andrew Hodges  
Mr David Shelmerdine

## **Annexe 1 – detailed responses to Members' Allowance Survey**

**Number of respondents – 26**

**Percentage of Councillors – 54%**

Question 1 – How long have you been a Councillor?

- Less than 1 year - 2
- 1-4 years - 15
- 4-8 years - 4
- 8-12 years - 0
- Over 12 years - 4

Question 2 – what is your current role?

- Leader of the Council / Leader of the Opposition / Group Leader - 1
- Deputy Leader of the Council / Deputy Leader of the Opposition / Deputy Group Leader - 1
- Chair / Vice-Chair of the Council - 1
- Executive member - 4
- Committee Chair / Vice-Chair - 2
- None of the above (i.e., 'backbench' councillor) – 17

Question 3 – what is your employment status?

- Retired - 5
- Employed full time - 13
- Employed part time - 2
- Self employed - 5
- Other - 1

Question 4 – On average, how many hours do you spend on Council work each month?

- 0 hours – 6
- 4 hours – 1
- 8 hours – 1
- 10 hours – 2
- 14 hours – 1
- 16 hours – 1
- 30 hours – 5
- 35 hours – 1
- 40 hours – 2
- 56 hours – 1
- 80 hours – 1
- 90 hours – 1

- 100 hours – 3

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

5. Of the respondents who receive an SRA, three considered that an average of 20 hours per month related to the post for which the SRA was received. Four further valid answers were received, varying from 6 to 75 hours.
6. Of the respondents who receive an SRA, seven considered that they held a role which should attract an SRA, but currently does not. Four of these responses referred to being a member of Planning Committee, one referenced Vice-Chair of Council, one group whip, and one portfolio holder.
7. 21 respondents considered that part of their time was given on a voluntary basis
8. With regards to the current rate of member allowance and the workload associated with the role, and if it was thought to be adequate:
  - 15 members thought that the allowance should be increased in line with any cost of living percentages changes in the CDC officer pay rates
  - Two thought it should be increased by an amount not linked to CDC officer cost of living pay awards
  - One considered the allowance should be frozen at the current level; and
  - Five thought that Members' Allowances should be assessed every 4 years and an automatic increase matching the staff annual cost of living pay aware be applied
  - Five additional comments were received, which were as follows:
    - CDC allowances have not kept pace with inflation over a number of years due to decisions taken by previous administrations to freeze the amounts. This means that CDC allowances are very out of step with other councils. For them to make sense in terms of their intended (i.e. to compensate for an appropriate amount of time beyond what would normally be seen as reasonable for a voluntary position) and in respect of the responsibilities taken on and the experience provided, they should be reviewed against other Oxon district allowances and uplifted accordingly.
    - Assessed every 4 years and a decision then made on what the increment will be
    - small increase for all, larger increase for planning members and other long committee such as O&S
    - I believe that the increase should be the first option considered by default, but if Council is struggling to balance a budget, this may need to be compromised.

- Compared to other local authorities and the amount of time spent. With the increase in social media you are contacted 24:7 and a lot more questions are raised,
9. With regards to Dependants' Careers' Allowance, Childcare Allowance, Travel and Subsistence Allowances, respondents made the following comments:
- Some councillors have many parishes and should be allowed to claim mileage to attend those meetings.
  - Should pay a travel allowance to cover Parish meetings.
  - The process of claiming expenses could be streamlined. It would be far more convenient to do this online rather than having to complete a paper version and then scan and submit via email.
  - Childcare allowances demand professional or invoiceable receipts. This limits the use of friends that may not wish to invoice in this way. I feel that allocating a cost per hour for childcare would make this easier
  - Travel allowance too low.
  - This is a good thing and should be maintained
10. The following additional comments were made by 11 of the respondents:
- For the number of hours councillors spend helping the district the allowance does not cover the costs of this voluntary position.
  - I think Cherwell Councillors have been careful to keep allowances to a minimum bearing in mind the cost to taxpayers and some Councillors have decided not to take them, however I think realistic and fair allowances need to be paid
    1. to help full time working Councillors will less flexibility who have to make up the time with employers / use annual leave
    2. to ensure we attract Councillors from the widest possible backgrounds and circumstances not just those who can afford to do it
    3. to encourage the maximum effort and input from all Councillors
    4. to ensure that Councillors are not disincentivized from sitting on the more onerous (in terms of time needed for preparation and meetings themselves) committees.
  - As stated above. CDC's allowances scheme really needs root and branch revision.
  - I think it is essential that an allowance is payable to Members - in order to ensure that the role of Local Councillor is open to everyone.
  - I consider for the amount of time committed and due to our payment being below that of other Oxfordshire Councils, that it should be increased.
  - I have seen more working cllrs come into local government and allowance should take that into account
  - M/C allowance is far too low
  - It's important for working class people to have a reasonable allowance because they put in a lot of time that would probably be going to paid work otherwise, so the allowance makes it more financially accessible to be a Councillor. I think voters deserve reps who work hard and put the hours in, and elected members who do this in good faith should be

compensated fairly in line with other District Councils. In a unitary, this will need to be adjusted further based on level of responsibilities.

- It should be encouraged to be taken which allows people with dependents (elderly parents, young children, disabled) to be able to take part in local government.
- Should be increased in line with cost of living