

Council – 29 September 2025

Members Allowances 2025

1. Aim

To consider the findings and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

2. Summary

A review of Members Allowances Scheme has been undertaken by an Independent Remuneration Panel. The findings of the review, along with recommendations, are provided in detail, to enable Council to make a determination on changes to the existing Scheme.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That, Council note and thank, the work of the Independent Remuneration Panel in producing their report.
- 3.2 That, Council consider each recommendation as set out in 4.7 and resolve to accept or reject any of the proposals.
- 3.3 That, subject to 3.2 above, the Interim Director of Governance be authorised to amend the Council's Constitution in respect of Part 6, Members Allowances and publish the new scheme in accordance with Local Authorities (Member Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

4. Report Detail - Know

- 4.1 The current Member Allowances Scheme was originally adopted by Council on 25th February 2021.
- 4.2 Following, a subsequent review in 2024, a revised Member Allowance Scheme was adopted by Council on 15 April 2025.
- 4.2 In November 2023, February and March 2025, Council agreed to formally appoint independent members to the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to consider the entire Member Allowances Scheme.
- 4.2 The Independent Remuneration Panel consists of three members who are entirely independent of the Council. They are Richard Hood, Ruth Harrison and Gary Timmins. The IRP were provided with full information concerning the Elected Members Allowance Scheme and met all of the current group prior to finalising their report.

- 4.3 Representations were also invited from all Members of the Council, either by e-mail to the Chair. All political leaders were invited to attend the panel and made representations in relation to the scheme. The Panel concluded their analysis with substantial comparator information and drafted their findings report as set out at **Appendix 1** herewith.
- 4.4 The Panel's terms of reference allow for unfettered discretion to make recommendations upon the scheme of allowances for Elected Members. The Council has discretion as to whether or not to accept the recommendations made in whole or in part.
- 4.5 In undertaking their review the Independent Remuneration Panel were given full details of the Council's current political arrangements, provided with elected member job descriptions and provided with tabulated analysis of members allowance schemes for authorities in the Black Country, West Midlands, and those of our relevant CIPFA family of authorities.
- 4.7 The summary recommendations of the Panel are as follows:
- 1. That there be no change to the structure of the existing allowances as set out in appendix 1;*
 - 2. The annual updating of member allowances should remain linked to the NJC employees' award except where council staff agree a lower percentage rise, freeze or reduction. In years where the pay award is a fixed value (rather than a percentage) the annual updating of Members Allowances will be the actual percentage of increase received at scale point 44.*

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 The power to have a Members Allowance Scheme is conferred by the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 made under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government Act 2000.
- 5.2 Under Part 4 of the above regulations the Council has to have regard to the recommendations made in relation to its Members Allowance Scheme by an Independent Remuneration Panel.
- 5.3 The Independent Remuneration Panel must produce a report making recommendations as to the responsibilities and duties in respect of the items contained between Section 21 (1) (a) to (g) of the said regulations.
- 5.4 There is a requirement for the local authority to publicise the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel as soon as reasonably practicable after receiving a report from the Panel setting out the panel's recommendations.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 In accordance with statute, the Council is required to consult with and receive recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel, who have substantial information concerning Councillors allowances, on which they base their recommendations.
- 6.2 All the political group leaders of the Council were invited to provide comments to the Independent Remuneration Panel for them to be considered as part of their deliberations in reviewing the current scheme of allowances. Individual Elected Members were also invited to make representations to the Independent Remuneration Panel.

7. Internal Financial Implications

- 7.1 The cost of the various proposals put forward by the Independent Remuneration Panel are set out in **Appendix 1**.

8. Property implications

- 8.1 There are no property implications to consider.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

- 9.1 There are no known health and wellbeing implications.

10. Reducing Inequalities

- 10.1 The Members Allowance scheme provides encouragement for wider and more inclusive political representation.

11. Staffing implications

- 11.1 There are no staffing implications to consider.

12. Climate Impact

- 12.1 There are no climate impact implications to consider.

13. Decide

- 13.1 That, the Council decide whether to accept, amend or reject the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel as set out in Appendix 1.

14. Respond

- 14.1 For Council to consider, approve, and implement the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

15. Review

- 15.1 The Council is obliged to adopt a new Members Allowance Scheme every year. However, where an index is applied to the scheme, the Council can rely upon that index for up to 4 years without the need to review the scheme.

If the Council fails to adopt a new scheme (even if it is to re-adopt the existing scheme) before the existing one expires, then the Council will be unable to pay its members allowances thereafter until a new scheme is adopted. The Council will follow the legislative guidance as set out in reviewing the Members Allowance Scheme.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel – July 2025

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REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (THE PANEL)

MEETING ON 18 JULY 2025

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report is the product of a full, periodic review undertaken into Walsall MBC's Remuneration Scheme. This considered all parts of the Scheme, taking a comprehensive oversight over all matters in relation to the operation of the Scheme.
- 1.2 The last time the Scheme had been considered was an interim review undertaken in February 2024 in which the Panel had been asked to look at specific proposals.
- 1.2 The role of the Panel is as the name suggests to offer an independent assessment of the levels of allowances payable to elected members/Councillors (and co-opted and independent persons) serving the democratic process at the Council. The three Panel Members have no direct connection with the Council and are volunteers.

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The Panel met on Friday 18 July 2025 receiving briefing papers from the officers on the Scheme and scope to be considered.
- 2.2 Detailed benchmarking information was provided on allowances paid by other comparator local authorities, including constituent councils within the West Midlands.
- 2.3 The Panel received oral representations in person from three group leaders:
Councillors:
 - Mike Bird,
 - Aftab Nawaz and
 - Matt Ward.
- 2.4 One written representation was received from a Councillor.
- 2.5 The Panel carefully considered all of these inputs before determining what recommendation(s) it would make.
- 2.6 The Panel was unanimous in its decision making in its recommendation to the Council.

3. PANEL MEMBERS

- 3.1 The IRP currently comprises the following members
 - Ruth Harrison,
 - Richard Hood and
 - Gary Timmins.

- 3.2 Richard is a longstanding member who has served on the Panel since 2007 and serves to provide continuity and background on how the Scheme has evolved and developed. Ruth and Gary are recent appointments, bringing with them different and new perspectives, and fresh challenge.
- 3.3 The Panel wishes to record its thanks and gratefulness in particular to Craig Goodall and Matthew Powis for their work in supporting the review.
- 3.4 The Panel commends this report to the Councillors.

4. ISSUES

- 4.1 The Panel was mindful of the most recent changes made to the Scheme in 2024.
- 4.2 Amongst other specific things, was the inclusion an adjustment mechanism linking the annual increase Members Allowances to the award to staff in line with the National Joint Council (NJC). In years where the pay award is a fixed value (rather than a percentage) the annual updating of Members Allowances will be the actual percentage of increase received at scale point 43. However, the Panel were advised that scale point 44 was more appropriate as this fell outside of maximum NJC scale point. This mechanism sought to maintain the value of the allowance in real terms in the light of general cost of living increases. At the time of the Review it was noted that agreement on the NJC increase for 2025 had not yet been reached. However, this was subsequently agreed as 3.2%.
- 4.3 In relation to the **Basic Allowance**, the Panel considered the comparative data and noted that Walsall's current payment of £13,456 remained close to the average paid in respect of statistical and neighbouring authorities which was £13,621. Therefore, it appeared to the Panel to be no justification for increasing the level of the current allowance.
- 4.4 The Panel was mindful that this was an allowance paid to all Councillors irrespective of their individual Council workload and effort, and reflected the remuneration appropriate for the 'average' councillor. For heavily active Members, this amount may not accurately reflect their efforts, whereas the amount paid may over-reward those who are less active. However, there is no flexibility in law in the way that the Basic Allowance can be applied and matters over individual workload and performance is, therefore, best addressed by group leaders.
- 4.5 Similarly, in relation to **Special Responsibility Allowances**, the level of allowances paid at Walsall was aligned to the comparator averages.
- 4.6 During the discussion with Group Leaders, the issue of the workload of the Licensing and Safety Committee was raised but it was noted that this may change following the appointment of a new chair and a different approach. Accordingly, the Panel determined to make no change to that specific chair's allowance but to revisit this particular issue at the next review.
- 4.7 No representations were made, or causes for change identified, in relation to any other part of the Scheme.
- 4.8 In conclusion and having carefully deliberated carefully, the Panel found no reason to adjust the existing Scheme and, accordingly, made the following recommendations.

5. Recommendations

1. That there be no change to the structure of the existing allowances as set out in Appendix 1.

2. That annual updating of member allowances should remain linked to the NJC employees' award except where council staff agree a lower percentage rise, freeze or reduction. In years where the pay award is a fixed value (rather than a percentage) the annual updating of Members Allowances will be the actual percentage of increase received at scale point 44.

The Panel

23 July 2025

Appendix 1 – 2025 Walsall MBC Remuneration Scheme for agreement

Basic Allowance	£13,886
Special Responsibility Allowances	
Leader of the Council	£40,880
Deputy Leader of the Council	£23,979
Other Group Leaders (Group threshold at a minimum of 6 seats or 10% whichever is greater of the Council Membership)	£12,979
Cabinet Members	£19,528
Regulatory Committees Chairs and Scrutiny Chairs:	
Audit Committee	£9,947
Appointments Panel	£6,221
Planning Committee	£12,802
Employment Appeals Subs	£6,221
Licensing & Safety Committee	£12,187
Taxi Licensing Sub-Committees	£6,221
Standards Committee	£6,221
Health and Wellbeing Board	£6,221
Corporate Parenting Board	£6,221
Scrutiny Committee Chairs	£12,586
Independent Members	£774
Independent Chair of the Audit Committee	£6,070
Cabinet Support Assistant	£1,952
Other Allowances	
Carers Allowance	£1100 a year
Travel & Subsistence	Officer rates outside West Midlands