

APPENDIX G: Members' Allowances Scheme (2023/24)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Members' Allowances Scheme is made under the provisions of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the 2003 Regulations) and other Regulations which may come into force from time to time.

In making this Scheme, the Council must have regard to the recommendations made by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

This Scheme has effect for the financial year appertaining to the year it is introduced and continues until amended or revised.

This Scheme may be amended at any time having regard to the recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

For the avoidance of doubt, where the only change to this Scheme is effected by annual updating of allowances, this Scheme shall be deemed not to have been amended.

2. STATUTORY MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

2.1 Basic Allowance

Every District Council Member shall be paid an annual basic allowance as set out in Schedule 1 below. It will be paid in instalments of one-twelfth on the 15th of each month, with minor adjustments where necessary to ensure that the total annual sum is correct. The allowance is subject to annual updating - see paragraph 2.8 below.

The basic allowance covers time incurred by a District Council Member in carrying out his/her ordinary duties for the Council. However, it excludes travel and subsistence allowances for approved duties which are referred to separately below. Furthermore, the Council makes available to Members a certain amount of equipment over and above the basic allowance. Again, this is referred to separately below.

2.2 Special Responsibility Allowances

An annual special responsibility allowance (SRA) will be paid to certain Members. SRAs will be paid in monthly instalments. They are not payable when a Member temporarily steps into another's role (say, when the Vice-Chairman chairs a meeting). The special responsibility allowances are set out in Schedule 1 below.

2.3 Child and Dependant Carer's Allowance

Members may claim an allowance in respect of expenses necessarily incurred in relation to the provision of care for their children and other dependants while carrying out approved duties. Approved duties are listed in a separate section below. Claims

should be made monthly in arrears, by attaching the receipt(s) to the submitted Member's claim form and entering the amount claimed on the form. Claims will not be paid without documented receipts.

The allowance to be paid per dependent child per hour during normal daytime working hours (8am to 6pm on Mondays to Fridays) and a single maximum payment per hour as set in Schedule 1 for child care arranged outside normal working hours, accompanied by an official receipt.

The dependent adults carer's allowance will be paid up to the figure in Schedule 1 per hour for the employment of a replacement carer for whom the Member is normally a full time carer. This will also apply where the Member has to arrange care for a disabled dependent child. In either case, the definition of dependant being as set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996 (s.57A), such claims to be supported by a doctor's letter confirming that the dependant is in need of constant or specialist care/supervision; (NB Carer's allowance and the allowance payable in respect of a disabled dependent child, is not payable in respect of the same child for the same period.).

2.4 Pensionable Allowances

Statutory regulations allow local authorities to make certain allowances pensionable, but only if so recommended by their independent remuneration panel. At Sevenoaks it has been agreed that the option to allow Members to participate in the Local Government Pension Scheme should not be introduced at this time.

2.5 Renunciation of Allowances

A Member may choose to forego all or part of his/her entitlement to basic or special responsibility allowances under this scheme. If this is the case, he/she should give notice of this in writing to the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer, stating what element of his/her allowance entitlement he/she does not wish to claim. The notice should also state whether this is for the current municipal year or the remainder of the Member's term of office – if the notice does not specify a time period then it will be assumed to mean the remainder of the term of office.

A Member not wishing to claim the expenses described in section 3 below need not give notice in writing – he/she simply does not submit any expenses claim forms.

2.6 Publicising Allowances and Expenses Paid

As soon as reasonably practicable after determining a Scheme of Allowances, a copy of the Scheme will be made available for inspection and publication will take place in accordance with the 2003 Regulations.

As soon as practicable after 1st April each year arrangements will be made for the publication of the total paid to each Member in each category of allowance specified in this Scheme, in the preceding year.

2.7 Suspension of Allowances

Any Member/Co-optee who is suspended or partially suspended from his/her responsibilities or duties as a Member of the Council in accordance with legislation or regulations that may come into force from time to time may have his/her allowances withdrawn for the period of any suspension.

Where any payment allowance under this Scheme has already been made in respect of any period during which a Member/Co-optee is suspended or partially suspended or ceases to be a Member or Co-optee of the Council or is in any other way not entitled to receive the allowance in respect of that period the Council may require that such allowance or part of as relates to any such period be repaid to the Council.

2.8 Annual Updating

Members' allowances except for travelling expenses are updated annually in line with the National Joint Council for Local Government Services pay award.

3. **PAYMENT OF EXPENSES**

3.1 Approved Duties

Members/Co-optee members may claim reimbursement of travel, subsistence, Child and Dependent Carer's Allowance and conference expenses incurred whilst undertaking an approved duty. No expenses claimed more than three months after they were incurred will be paid.

Attendance at any of the following is an approved duty:

- (a) The attendance at a meeting of the District Council or of any committee or sub-committee or Working Group of the District Council, or of any body to which the Council make appointments or nominations, or any committee or sub-committee of such a body (If the outside organisation will pay travel and/or subsistence costs, then the Member should claim against that organisation and cannot claim from the District Council.);
- (b) The attendance at any meeting, the holding of which is authorised by the District Council, or a committee or sub-committee of the District Council, or a joint committee of the District Council and one or more local authority within the meaning of section 279(1) of the 1972 Act, or a sub-committee of such a joint committee provided that: -
 - (i) where the authority is divided into two or more political groups, it is a meeting to which members of at least two groups have been invited, or
 - (ii) if the authority is not so divided, it is a meeting to which at least two members of the authority have been invited;
- (c) the attendance at a meeting of any association of authorities of which the District Council is a member

- (d) the attendance at a meeting of the executive (Cabinet) or a meeting of any of its committees;
- (e) the attendance at pre-meeting briefings by Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees;
- (f) the performance of any duty in pursuance of any standing order made under section 135 of the 1972 Act requiring a Member or Members to be present while tender documents are being opened;
- (g) the performance of any duty in connection with the discharge of any function of the District Council by or under any enactment and empowering or requiring the District Council to inspect or authorise the inspection of premises (including site visits for planning matters); and
- (h) the attendance of any pre-arranged meetings with Officers relating to issues within the Members' responsibilities. This would encompass Portfolio Holder briefings etc. In the event of any question of interpretation, the Chief Executive, or, in his absence, the Monitoring Officer, will decide.
- (i) The attendance at meetings, training or other events where the Member is an official Council representative or requested to attend by the Leader, relevant Cabinet Member or Chief Officer.

Further Clarification of Approved Duties:

In-house training and development seminars including Members' Induction, Staff Induction and service-specific seminars

Conferences or seminars arranged by a Chief Officer.

Expenses will not be paid for attendance at national and regional bodies if the Member was not appointed to the organisation or event by the District Council.

Travel and subsistence allowances for co-opted and lay/expert members of committees and panels will be paid, at the same level as for elected Members.

Schedule 2 sets out tables of examples of what are approved duties. In specific cases not covered by this schedule Members should contact the Democratic Services Team. A decision will be made by the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer and the table updated accordingly

3.2 Travelling, Subsistence and other Expenses

Travelling Allowances

Travelling allowances are payable in accordance with the HMRC maximum tax free allowance from time to time:

Per mile up to and including 10,000 miles	45 pence
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Over 10,000 miles

25 pence

Electric Vehicle Mileage is paid at HMRC rates, currently 5 pence per mile

Bicycles:

20 pence per mile tax free as per HMRC's maximum tax free allowance for claims.

Motorcycles:

24 pence per mile tax free as per HMRC's tax free allowance for claims.

Public Transport:

Authorised journeys taken using public transport should be reimbursed at the cost of standard travel.

Travelling allowances may be claimed by Members for attendance at meetings of the bodies or for the purposes listed in 3.1 above.

Car sharing is encouraged by the Council for duties involving more than one Member. Any claim should be made by the vehicle driver only.

Travel by taxi should only be used in exceptional circumstances and, if it is necessary, should involve more than one Member if possible.

3.3 Subsistence Expenses and Council Refreshments

- A Member may claim reimbursement of subsistence costs incurred personally while on approved duties. The latter are described at a separate section below. In order to qualify for reimbursement:
- the Member must be away from his/her usual residence for a minimum of four hours (this time period applying only to the time spent in travel to and from, and attendance at, the approved duty outside the District)
- there must be no meal provided at the approved duty, either by the Council or any other organiser for the event
- claims will only be reimbursed for subsistence purchased in the close vicinity of a local event, or in the vicinity of, or whilst travelling to or from, an event more distant.
- the Member should attach a receipt to his/her expenses claim form to show that a meal was purchased (and the amount paid will be the amount incurred and shown on the receipt up to the maximum limit shown below).

The rates payable are set annually when the annual pay award is agreed. They are currently as set out in the table below.

Subsistence type	Details	Payment amount
Lunch allowance	Covers the period from 12 noon to 2 p.m.	£9.86
Evening meal allowance	For a period of absence ending after 7 p.m.	£12.21
Absence overnight	To cover hotel and associated expenses – but note that, in these cases, the Council will book and pay for hotel accommodation directly (see ‘conferences’ at separate section below)	£79.82 (increased to a maximum of £91.04 in certain circumstances, e.g. for meetings in London and for LGA meetings)

If a meal is taken on a train, this is taken to relate to the subsistence allowance which it most closely equates to (i.e. lunch or evening). The above conditions still apply.

The Council may provide refreshments for ‘approved duty’ meetings which last over the lunchtime period or which start between 4.30 p.m. and 6 p.m.

The District Council requires that Members ensure that any overnight stay bookings for approved duties and conferences are made by Council Officers. The Council will then pay for the cost of the accommodation and breakfast. Lunch and evening meal costs up to the subsistence amounts shown above and travel will be claimable.

3.6 Child and dependant carer’s allowances

Members may claim an allowance (set out in Schedule 1 below) for the use of childminders, babysitters or other sitters for dependants while carrying out approved duties. See section 2.3 above for details. Claims must be supported by receipts for payments made.

3.7 ICT and other equipment

Members are securely able to access all Council information and communications from any internet access point, including a home computer, through the Members’ Electronic Portal. In order to recognise that part of the cost of provision of such equipment is for the performance of Members’ duties, Members may make claim for the following financial support:

- (a) In exceptional circumstances where a Member is unable to afford the purchase cost of a suitable computer the Council would consider assisting the Member

by advancing a lump sum which would then be recovered via repayments from this allowance;

- (b) where a Member has been provided with a Council funded computer, no allowance will be paid; and
- (c) all such allowances are subject to tax along with Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances in the normal way.

3.8 Claims procedure

Claims for travel, subsistence and dependant carer's allowances must be made each month using the Members' claim form. Members can either submit a claim in writing or on-line. If any Member wishes to submit claims on-line, he/she is required to sign a 'request to submit forms via e-mail' and return it to the Head of Legal & Democratic Services or Democratic Services Team Leader so that a members' claim form can be sent electronically for completion. All claims must be received by the Democratic Services Team by the twentieth day of the month. This is essential as they must be verified and approved by the twenty third day of the month in time for the monthly payroll run on the fifteenth of the following month. Any claims received after these dates will be paid on the subsequent pay run.

Members should ensure that they submit claims each month as claims stretching back over several months may be delayed owing to the increased difficulty of verifying them. Claims over 3 months old will not be paid. All claims to be finalised within one month of the start of the financial year.

The claim form must include receipts for all expenses claimed other than car mileage, and must be signed by the Member to declare that he/she is entitled to all amounts claimed and has not already been reimbursed for these amounts by the Council or any other organisation. For those claims submitted electronically, all relevant receipts must also be submitted to support the claim.

If a Member wishes to reclaim tax paid on subsistence allowances, he/she must provide relevant receipts to HMRC. If a Member applies for benefit, he/she must declare any allowances and expenses received from the Council on his/her application form.

Should it ever arise that the Council incurs expenditure on behalf of a Member's spouse or partner, then a debtor's account will be sent to the Member to recover all additional costs and a copy of the accounts will be placed with the file of payments to Members.

4. GUIDANCE FOR OFFICERS IN RESPECT OF PAYMENT TO MEMBERS

All Officers must adhere to the above scheme when verifying and making payments to Members. The Head of Legal & Democratic Services or Democratic Services Team Leader must verify all Member claims prior to passing them for payment taking particular note of Schedule 2. The Finance Team will maintain a file of payments to

Members. For all payments under the Members' Allowances Scheme, this must show the name of the recipient, together with the amount and nature of each payment. It is open for inspection free of charge by electors in the area, who may copy any part of it.

The scheme also applies to Officers incurring expenditure on a Member's behalf – if an Officer spends more than the prescribed limits shown above for a Member's travel and/or subsistence then *the Officer cannot claim the excess, but must bear the cost personally*. If an Officer wishes to make a claim for Member travel and/or subsistence, he/she must complete an employee travel and subsistence expenses claim form in the usual way, but stating clearly which Member(s) were paid for, and the details of the payment (cost, time of day incurred) which will allow it to be checked against the prescribed subsistence scheme. A copy must be sent immediately to the Finance Team for recording in the file of payments to Members.

If any other issue of payment to a Member arises, other than one covered by the above Members' allowance scheme or a normal service issue, then prior written approval should be obtained from the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer.

When a department arranges any seminar, conference, course or visit which will incur costs on behalf of a Member, the lead officer must liaise with the Chief Finance Officer to ensure that only permitted expenditure is incurred. The lead Officer of the event should keep a list of Members attending an approved event, and forward it immediately afterwards to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services or Democratic Services Team Leader and the Finance Team to ensure that any subsequent Member claims for travelling and/or subsistence can be verified.

Tours outside the Sevenoaks District may be arranged by the relevant department. They will still require formal committee/cabinet approval and adequate budgetary provision. Any overnight stop, unless paid for directly by the Council, and any lunch or evening meals purchased for the Members involved must adhere to the subsistence rates shown above. If air tickets are reserved, the cheapest rate of public air travel must always be used.

Any proposed payment or commitment of civic funds must be referred to the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer for prior approval. These Officers must ensure all payments so made remain within budgeted levels of expenditure, and that any payments to or on behalf of Members are recorded in the file of payments to Members.

Schedule 1

Members Allowances 2023/24

With effect from the commencement of the municipal year 2023/24

Description of Allowance	2023/24 Allowance per Member £	
Basic Allowance (all Members)	6,387	
<u>Special Responsibility Allowances:</u>		
Cabinet Chairman (Council Leader)	23,370	
Deputy Leader	14,023	
Cabinet members	8,181	
Deputy Cabinet Members	1,869	
Opposition Group Leaders:		per Group Member
Liberal Democrats (14 Members)	4,410	
Green (4 Members)	1,260	
Independents (2 Members)	630	
<u>Chairmen</u>		
Advisory Committees (x7)	2,922	
Audit	2,922	
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending Board	2,922	
Development Management	5,843	
Governance	2,922	
Health Liaison Board	2,922	
Licensing	2,922	
Scrutiny	2,922	
Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board	2,337	
Standards	1,869	
<u>Vice-Chairmen</u>		
Advisory Committees (x7)	0	
Audit	0	
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending Board	0	
Development Control	1,169	
Governance	0	
Health Liaison Board	0	
Licensing	0	
Scrutiny	0	

Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board	0
Standards	0

Committee Members

Development Control members	584
Licensing Committee members	157

Other

Standards co-optees	561
Child Care (p/h/p/child max)	8.00
Dependent Carers (p/h max)	19.00

Travel expenses continue to be based upon the HMRC approved rate

The existing scheme for meal and subsistence allowances continue

The existing IT allowance be stopped

Each Member can only receive one Special Responsibility Allowance

	2022/23 £	2023/24 Pay Award	
Chairman	11,590.00	5.68%	12,249.00
Vice Chairman	5,034.00	5.68%	5,320.00

Schedule 2

Members' Allowance Scheme – Approved Duties Specific Examples

- Attendance at a meeting of Council
- Attendance at a meeting of Cabinet (all Members)
- Attendance at a meeting of any Committee/Sub-Committee/Working Group/Board/Hearing of which you are a Member (attendance at Committee meetings as an observer is not considered an approved duty, the only exception to this being meetings of the Cabinet).
- Attendance at a meeting of any outside organisation that you are appointed to by the Executive or the Council
- Attendance at any Development Control Meeting and Development Control Site Meeting as agreed by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of Development Control, if you are a member of Development Control or a local member for the ward concerned
- Attendance of any other site visit approved by Council, the Executive or any Committee/Sub-Committee/Working Group/Board/Hearing, if you are a member of the relevant body
- Attendance by a member of the Executive at any Committee/Sub-Committee/Working Group/Board/Hearing that is discussing matters within that member's Portfolio

- Attendance at any meeting organised by Officers of the Council to which at least two political groups have been invited
- Attendance at any training session organised by Officers of the Council to which the Member has been invited
- Attendance at any service-specific seminar organised by Officers of the Council to which the Member has been invited
- Attendance at any Conference or Seminar where prior agreement has been made by a Chief Officer of the Council
- Attendance at pre-meeting briefings by Chairman/Vice-Chairman of Committees/Sub-Committees/Working Groups/Boards/Hearings
- Attendance of members of the Executive at Briefing meetings
- Attendance of a member of the Executive that is required to attend a tender opening
- Attendance at any meeting pre-arranged by Officers of the Council relating to issues within the Member's responsibilities