

**Buckinghamshire Council**  
**Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel**  
**9 January 2020**

**1. Background**

1.1 Buckinghamshire Council established an Independent Remuneration Panel (the Panel), in order to advise the Council on a scheme of allowances for councillors reflecting the governance arrangements and responsibilities introduced by the Local Government Act 2000.

1.2 This report has been prepared by the Panel for Buckinghamshire Council comprising of:

Hazel Bentall  
Nigel Palmer  
Dr Bill Reid  
Mark Tosh

1.3 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the Regulations) apply to local authorities including unitary, district and county councils.

1.4 The Regulations require a relevant authority to make a scheme providing for the payment of a basic allowance (BA) to each member of that authority. The BA must be the same for each member of the authority.

1.5 A relevant authority's scheme of allowances may also provide for the payment of special responsibility allowances (SRAs) to such members of the authority as have special or additional responsibilities. The specified categories of special or additional responsibilities which may be included in a scheme of allowances include:

- i) Acting as leader or deputy leader of a political group within the authority;
- ii) Acting as a member of an executive where the authority is operating executive arrangements within the meaning of part 2 of the Local Government Act 2000;
- iii) Presiding at meetings of a committee or sub-committee of the authority;
- iv) Representing the authority at meetings of or arranged by any other body;
- v) Acting as a member of a committee or sub-committee of the authority which meets with exceptional frequency or for exceptionally long periods;
- vi) Acting as the spokesman of a political group on a committee or sub-committee of the authority; and

- vii) Carrying out such other activities in relation to the discharge of the authority's functions as require of the member an amount of time and effort equal to or greater than would be required of him or her by any of the above mentioned activities.

1.6 SRAs need not be the same and may reflect the different expectations, time and effort involved in particular roles.

1.7 Member allowance schemes may also provide for the payment of a dependent carers' allowance and also for members' travelling and subsistence whilst acting in connection with their duties as a member of the authority.

1.8 Before a relevant authority may make or amend a scheme of allowances it must have regard to recommendations made in relation to the scheme by an independent remuneration panel.

## **2. Buckinghamshire Council**

2.1 Following the parliamentary approval of the Buckinghamshire (Structural Changes) Order 2019, Buckinghamshire Council will come into effect on 1 April 2020 and the current district councils of Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe and Buckinghamshire County Council will cease to exist.

2.2 Elections for the 147 seats on Buckinghamshire Council will be held on 7 May 2020.

2.3 For the period 1 April to 11 May 2020 (11 May 2020 being the date on which the 147 newly elected councillors take office) "the Interim Period", the 202 current members of the five sovereign councils mentioned above will continue as members of Buckinghamshire Council. As the current councils will no longer exist, their respective schemes of members' allowances will cease and allowances will no longer be payable, pursuant to the Regulations.

2.4 Therefore, in addition to making recommendations on a scheme of allowances for the new cohort of councillors to be elected in May, the Panel has also been asked to consider what approach should be taken to the provision of allowances during the Interim Period.

2.5 A scheme for the payment of a BA must be adopted by the Shadow Council for Buckinghamshire Council. It may also adopt a scheme for the payment of SRAs and other allowances. Members must have regard to the recommendations of the Panel in relation to a scheme of allowances before adopting any scheme. Therefore, councillors themselves acting as a relevant authority make the final decision about what allowances are to be available.

2.6 Regulation 20 (2) requires that an independent remuneration panel shall consist of at least three members none of whom:

- (a) Is also a member of an authority in respect of which it makes recommendations or is a member of a committee or sub-committee of such an authority; or
- (b) Is disqualified from being or becoming a member of an authority.

2.7 The four members of the Panel are individuals, none of whom are disqualified from being or becoming a member of a relevant authority.

2.8 The Panel has been asked to formulate recommendations for a scheme of members' allowances for Buckinghamshire Council for the Interim Period.

2.9 The Panel met on 12 November 2019 and 9 January 2020, and corresponded regularly throughout the process through electronic methods.

2.10 The Panel was provided with the following evidence:

- (i) relevant guidance and legislation (Allowances Regulations);
- (ii) benchmarking data of similar sized unitary authorities and current Buckinghamshire Councils' current allowances;
- (iii) information relating to the composition of Buckinghamshire Council;
- (iv) emerging governance structure for Buckinghamshire Council and anticipated roles of members, including the proposed structure and role of scrutiny within the new Council; and
- (v) a summary of the proposed committees included within the governance structure.

2.11 A questionnaire was sent to all of the Shadow Buckinghamshire Councillors seeking views on the average amount of time spent on council business, what level of BA may be appropriate for members of Buckinghamshire Council and other aspects relating to members' allowances. 46 responses were received, although not all respondents provided a response to all of the questions.

2.12 Members of the Shadow Executive provided a proposed scheme for the Panel to consider.

2.13 The Panel was supported by:

Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Council  
Cath Whitehead, Head of Legal at Wycombe District Council and Deputy Monitoring Officer for the Shadow Buckinghamshire Council  
Mathew Bloxham, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager for Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils (C&SB)  
Leslie Ashton, Senior Democratic and Electoral Services Officer for C&SB  
Jack Pearce, Democratic and Electoral Services Officer for C&SB

2.14 The Panel recognises and acknowledges that the evidence provided is based upon emerging work in relation to the development of the Constitution and governance structure for Buckinghamshire Council and the best predictions of workloads and roles.

2.15 The Panel had regard to the extent to which the initial 202 members of Buckinghamshire Council may be engaged in the normal business of a relevant authority in the Interim Period and whether proposals for the scheme of allowances should differ in the Interim Period.

2.16 The Panel notes that the reorganisation of the five councils provides a unique opportunity to update the allowances.

### **3. Recommendations for Interim Period – 1 April to 11 May 2020**

3.1 The Panel was advised that there were not any full council meetings scheduled to take place during the interim period. A small number of committees may meet during the interim period in order to deal with any urgent matters, and the Shadow Executive Committee will continue to meet informally and make urgent decisions where required. It is also noted that the pre-election period will have begun prior to 1 April, which may also have an impact upon and limit decision-making activity of the new authority during the Interim Period.

3.2 The Panel noted that there will be an ongoing community representation role for all councillors during the Interim Period. It is further noted that councillors seeking election to the new council will likely be involved in election campaign activities during this period.

3.3 The Panel considers that continuing the payment of a BA in the Interim Period would be in recognition that all councillors will continue to perform their community representation role, whether or not they seek election to the new council.

3.4 The Panel noted that the Shadow Executive would continue to meet informally during the interim period and would very much still be playing a key role in the operation of the new Council, with Shadow Executive Members being responsible for their own specific portfolios.

3.5 Taking account of the anticipated responsibility of the Shadow Executive Committee during this interim period, the Panel considered an SRA should be payable to each member of the Executive, although agreed that the SRA should take into account that key decisions required by the Executive during this period should be minimal.

- 3.6 The Panel received representations from Members that substitute members of the Shadow Executive would also have a role in deputising and being involved in the transition activities being undertaken by the Shadow Executive. However, on the understanding that there will not be a significant number of meetings and members of the Executive would usually attend all meetings, it is felt that a separate SRA is not warranted.
- 3.7 The Panel noted that it would not be lawful to continue the existing Councils' allowances schemes as this would lead to different levels of BA being payable which was not permitted in the regulations.
- 3.8 The Panel recommends to pay a BA to all members of the Shadow Council for the Interim Period based on the representational role only and reflects that all 202 councillors would continue to serve residents taking into account the pre-election period regardless of whether councillors were seeking re-election.
- 3.9 The Panel would further recommend that in the event of meetings being called in the Interim Period, then councillors should be reimbursed for their travelling expenses and a carer's allowance, if required, which should be payable based on its recommendations for the post-Interim Period at paragraphs 6.4 and 8.3.

**3.10 The Panel recommends that during the Interim Period:**

- (a) The rate of the basic allowance to be paid to members of Buckinghamshire Council shall be set at £360;**
- (b) An SRA of £600 be paid to Shadow Executive Members;**
- (c) Travel subsistence to be paid to members in line with the HMRC Mileage Allowance Payments for undertaking official business during the Interim Period;**
- (d) A dependant carers' allowance be paid to members as set out in paragraph 8.3**

**4. Recommendations for Buckinghamshire Council BA to come into effect on 11 May 2020**

- 4.1 The Panel carefully considered the benchmarking data provided, the representations put forward by members of the Shadow Executive and responses to the all member questionnaire.
- 4.2 Views of respondents to the questionnaire suggested a varied level of BA, ranging from remaining at the existing County Council rate to being brought in line with other unitary authorities. Many respondents felt that the BA should be performance based, something the Panel agrees with, however legislation

dictates that the BA must be the same for each such member of an authority and as such we are bound to recommending one BA. Respondents reported a wide ranging number of average hours spent per week on Council business. The working hours ranged from 6 to over 26 hours per week, with the majority reporting spending 16 to 20 hours per week on Council business, this could be explained in part by the wide range of roles performed by those councillors who returned the questionnaire. The majority expected that there would be an increase in the number of hours spent on council business in the new council. The reasons cited included that there would be an increased number of services which the new Council would provide. Other reasons cited included more time spent travelling, and fewer members. Several respondents commented that the expected time and workload would very much depend on the number of committees a Councillor was appointed to, and whether they held any positions with additional responsibility.

- 4.3 The Panel accepted that unitary council services would add significantly to councillors' workload. For example, District Councillors would not be experienced with complex services such as Adult and Children's services, whilst County Councillors may not be experienced with Local Planning and Licensing matters. The complexity of these services will add significantly to the workload of those councillors not used to dealing with strategic cross district services.
- 4.4 It was acknowledged that the BA should be set at a level that would attract people from a broad demographic to stand for election and make the role itself more attractive. This will be of further importance if the Council elects to hold meetings during daytime hours as candidates will want to know that they will be appropriately compensated for their loss of paid working time.
- 4.5 The Panel is aware that the BA is an allowance and not a salary and is offered in recognition of members' time and certain expenses incurred on Council business.
- 4.6 Within the sample of similar sized unitary authorities in the benchmarking data, the BA ranges from £10,500 to £14,472.
- 4.7 The Panel was advised that the electoral ratio figures for the new council state that the average electorate per councillor will be 1:3637 whereas currently it is 1:3102, 1:2302, 1:2402, 1:2958 and 1:10913 for Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks, Wycombe and Buckinghamshire County Council respectively. With the significant changes it would now seem that their existing allowances were not in keeping with unitary authorities.
- 4.8 The Panel is aware that the scheme can be set for a maximum period of four years and that the scheme may be linked to an index. The creation of the new Council makes the task of setting allowances a complex one. The Panel recognised that the Council was about to go through a period of significant change and therefore suggested that allowances be reviewed earlier than four

years. It was suggested that Councillors determine when the early review of allowances takes place, but this was likely to be around one to two years' time. After which a review of allowances could then be undertaken every four years to coincide with the election of new members. The Panel is aware that any proposed changes to an agreed scheme of allowances would be subject to the Council having regard to the recommendations of the Panel. If a review of allowances was not carried out after one year the Panel, having considered representations and data comparisons, recommended the annual indexation of allowances to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or the locally agreed officers' pay award, whichever is lower.

#### **4.9 The Panel recommends that the rate of the basic allowance paid to members:**

**(a) Be set at £13,000 per annum**

**(b) That a review of allowances be undertaken by the Panel at a suitable time determined by councillors to check that the scheme continues to be suitable following a period of significant change for the Council. If a review is not undertaken within one year then the basic allowance is to be adjusted by an amount equivalent to the increase in the officers' annual pay award or by CPI, whichever is lower. As the maximum period a scheme may be linked to an index is four years the Panel must meet to review allowances no later than 2024.**

### **5. Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)**

5.1 The Panel agreed that in principle a clear justified methodology for calculating SRAs was required. It was recommended that SRAs be based on a proportion of the BA. For example, a multiplier of the BA could be used according to the duties and responsibilities associated with each role. The multipliers for each SRA are shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.2 From the questionnaire responses and Shadow Executive representations, the Leader of the new Council would be expected to establish the priorities, behaviours and values for the Buckinghamshire Council for the forthcoming five years. There are currently five sovereign councils with different cultures and bringing them together into a new organisation will be a significant task. There is a significant responsibility to start the Council in the most positive way. Cabinet Members would need to share significant workloads in order to achieve the objectives of the new council. The Cabinet Members would be responsible for individual decision making within their portfolio. The roles of the Leader and Cabinet Member would likely increase in the foreseeable period, particularly in relation to those equivalent roles in the existing sovereign councils. It was noted that the SRA for the Leader proposed by the Shadow Executive had been based on the complexity of the role and took into account the methodology used by the County Council and Wycombe District Council's which was 3.5 x basic

allowance. An SRA for the Leader is therefore recommended at the level shown in paragraph 5.16.

- 5.3 The Panel acknowledges that the role of the Cabinet Member was significantly more than committee chairman and the emerging governance structure indicates that they would be making individual key decisions. An SRA for Cabinet Members is therefore recommended at the level shown in paragraph 5.16.
- 5.4 The Panel understands that the Deputy Leader's workload would be different to that of a Cabinet Member since they would be required to deputise for the Leader. A Deputy Leader may also have responsibility for their own portfolio and individual decision making as well as also deputising for the Leader. Up to two Deputy Leaders may be appointed. The Leader would determine how cabinet roles would be allocated. The Panel therefore agreed to recommend that the SRA for Deputy Leader would depend according to the number of Deputy Leaders appointed and whether or not they had a portfolio. An SRA for Deputy Leader is therefore recommended at the level shown in paragraph 5.16.
- 5.5 The Panel noted that there could be up to 9 Deputy Cabinet Members and they had specific responsibilities set out in the draft Constitution. This included supporting and assisting Cabinet Members for example by deputising for Cabinet Members. This would involve frequently being in the office, attending meetings and briefings. They may for example be required to attend scrutiny committees to answer questions on policy and decisions made. In practice they would also likely take on a proportion of a Cabinet member's workload and would be involved in stakeholder engagement. Decisions delegated to a Corporate Director would also be made in consultation with a Deputy Cabinet Member, in the absence of a Cabinet Member. The Panel agreed that an SRA for Deputy Cabinet Members was appropriate to reflect the associated duties and responsibility. The Panel recommended the SRA as shown in paragraph 5.16.
- 5.6 The Panel understands that the civic role of Chairman of the Buckinghamshire Council would be significant and will have important links to other partner organisations. The Chairman will have an important role in managing and presiding over regular Council meetings to ensure that Councillors who are not Cabinet Members or Committee Chairman are able to hold office holders to account. Whilst the Panel are not in favour of paying SRAs to vice chairmen in general, the Vice-Chairman of Council is an exception, as, in addition to deputising for the Chairman at meetings of the Council, they will also fulfil a civic role. It is further recognised that each sovereign Council's Chairmen currently attend a large number of events and the amalgamation of all 5 councils would likely lead to a significantly increased workload. The SRAs recommended for the Council Chairman and Council Vice-Chairman is therefore recommended at the level shown in paragraph 5.16.
- 5.7 The Panel used the emerging governance structure and Constitution to inform its considerations of other SRAs and understands that the roles would evolve.



The Panel understands that scrutiny is a valuable resource which requires investment and is vital in holding the executive to account. There would be six scrutiny committees each with their own range of service areas. Each one would have similar workloads and responsibilities. It was felt that the workload and responsibility of Scrutiny Committee Chairman would be similar to other Committee Chairman and therefore the respective SRAs should be similar as shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.8 The Panel felt that the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee and the five Area Planning Committee Chairmen would have particular responsibilities, require additional time commitment and were publicly high profile Committees. For example, Committee decisions could be significant, high profile, publicly sensitive and often contentious. The SRA recommended is shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.9 The Panel noted that there would be one Licensing Committee with two standing sub committees and in noting the roles and responsibilities therefore agreed to recommended an SRA as shown in paragraph 5.16

5.10 It was noted that although the Chairman of the Pension Fund Committee had specific responsibilities this role would be filled by a Cabinet Member who would receive their own SRA. Similarly, the Chairman of the Pay and Senior Appointments Committee would also be filled by a Cabinet Member who would receive their own SRA. The Panel therefore agreed that there be no SRA for the Chairman of the Pension Fund Committee and the Chairman of the Pay and Senior Appointments Committee.

5.11 After considering the Committee structure, the Committees' associated roles and responsibilities, as detailed in the draft Constitution, the Panel recommended that the Chairman of each of the following Committees each have the same SRA as shown in paragraph 5.16.

- Audit and Governance Committee
- Standards and General Purposes Committee

5.12 Most respondents to the questionnaire advocated that members should only be entitled to claim one SRA regardless of how many SRAs they are entitled to. This is a rule that is common amongst local authority member allowances schemes.

5.13 It was noted that there would be 16 Community Boards and there would be a review of the operation of them early in the new Council's life. It was recommended that an SRA for Chairman of each Community Boards was justified. The recommended level is shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.14 An update on the Community Governance Review was noted, and the SRA for the High Wycombe Town Committee Chairman would therefore remain as shown in paragraph 5.16

5.15 The Panel heard that the role of minority group leaders would be important for the management of the new council. For the purposes of the Regulations a group is more than one member, but there is no requirement for an SRA to be paid to any Group Leader. The Panel considered what number ought to constitute a group for the purposes of the awarding of an SRA and took into account the large size of council membership. The Panel considers that were an allowance to be split proportionally, any registered group's Leader should be entitled to a share to reflect their additional workload.

**5.16 The Panel recommends that the following special responsibility allowances be paid in recognition of the additional workload, levels of responsibility and accountability placed upon the following roles:**

- **Leader £45,500 (3.5 x BA)**
- **Deputy Leader £26,000 (2 x BA) if they hold a portfolio**
- **Deputy Leader £13,000 (1 x BA) if they do not hold a portfolio**
- **Cabinet Members £19,500 (1.5 x BA)**
- **Deputy Cabinet Members £6,500 (0.5 x BA)**
- **Chairman of the Council £13,000 (1 x BA)**
- **Vice-Chairman of the Council £6,500 (0.5 x BA)**
- **Chairman of Strategic Planning Committee £9,750 (0.75 x BA)**
- **Chairmen of Area Planning Committees £9,750 (0.75 x BA)**
- **Chairman of Licensing Committee £3,900 (0.3 x BA)**
- **Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee £7,800 (0.6 x BA)**
- **Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees £7,800 (0.6 x BA)**
- **Chairman of Pension Fund Committee £ nil**
- **Chairman of Pay and Senior Appointments Committee £ nil**
- **Standards and General Purposes Committee £7,800 (0.6 x BA)**
- **Chairman of Community Boards £1,000**
- **Chairman of High Wycombe Town Committee £3,420 (if required)**
- **Group Leaders SRA £17,000 split proportionally dependent upon group size (e.g. Group Leader SRA = £17,000 divide by 147 x number of group members)**

**5.17 The Panel further recommends that:**

- a) **No SRAs be paid to Vice-Chairmen of Committees with the exception of the Vice-Chairman of Council**
- b) **Members may not receive more than one SRA**
- c) **That a review of allowances be undertaken by the Panel at a suitable time determined by councillors to check that the scheme is suitable following a period of significant change for the Council. If a review is not undertaken within one year then SRAs be adjusted by an amount**

**equivalent to the increase in the officers' annual pay award or by CPI, whichever is lower. As the maximum period a scheme may be linked to an index is four years the Panel must meet to review allowances no later than 2024.**

## **6. Travel Allowances**

6.1 The Panel notes that each of the relevant councils currently pays approved amounts under HMRC mileage allowance payments (MAPs). Anything payable above MAP approved amounts result in a taxable benefit to the claimant. The Panel further notes that to introduce taxable benefits into the travel allowances scheme would be a disproportionate bureaucratic burden on the authority.

6.2 The MAP approved amounts are currently:

- (a) Car – 45p per mile up to 10,000 and 25p per mile thereafter (including electrically powered);
- (b) Passenger payments – up to 5p per mile per passenger (up to a maximum of four) to be claimed only for passengers who would otherwise be eligible for travelling allowance;
- (c) Motorcycle – 24p per mile (including electrically powered);
- (d) Bicycle – 20p per mile (including electrically assisted e.g. ebike);
- (e) In relation to public transport (including rail and bus) – standard fare; and
- (f) Parking fees – actual cost

6.3 The Panel note and agree with Shadow Executive representations that sustainable methods of transport should be encouraged where possible, including use of electric/hybrid transportation.

**6.4 The Panel recommends the travel allowances be paid to members:**

**(a) In line with MAP for undertaking official business; and**

**(b) Travelling to the Buckinghamshire Council offices for meetings and official business.**

## **7. Subsistence allowances**

7.1 Subsistence allowances includes the costs of:

- (a) Accommodation (if a member is required to stay overnight); and
- (b) Meals and other 'subsistence' while travelling

7.2 The Panel wishes to emphasise that subsistence should be only claimable for undertaking official business outside of the new unitary council area.

**7.3 The Panel recommends the following subsistence allowances be paid to members in the case of an overnight stay away from the usual place of residence:**

- (i) Breakfast £6.50 (more than 4 hours away before 11am)**
- (ii) Lunch £9 (business journeys entailing working away from normal place of work between 12 and 2pm)**
- (iii) Dinner £11.50 (can be claimed when required to work outside of usual rostered requirements and away from normal place of work after 8.30pm)**

## **8. Carers' allowance**

8.1 The Panel reviewed the carers' allowance currently included in the sovereign councils' allowances schemes and acknowledges the importance of setting this at such a level so as to avoid deterring anyone seeking to become a councillor.

8.2 The Panel considered setting a ceiling, however understood that members would claim only where necessary and the monitoring officer could monitor this.

**8.3 The Panel recommends that a dependant carers' allowance (not payable to a member of the claimant's own household) be recompensed at:**

- (a) An hourly rate equivalent to 100% of the national living wage to be linked to changes at national level (£8.21 as at December 2019) for childcare**
- (b) An hourly rate of actual cost for adult/elderly/disabled dependent care, to be paid at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer**

## **9. Co-opted Members**

9.1 The Panel understands that Buckinghamshire Council will have co-opted members who are members of committees such as the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel. The Panel recognises these are important roles, but as members shall be receiving a basic allowance, the Panel felt that a separate SRA is not warranted.

## **10. Foregoing and donating allowances**

10.1 The Panel recommends that members may, if they wish, forego all or any part of their entitlement to BA or any SRA by giving notice in writing to the Monitoring Officer of Buckinghamshire Council.

10.2 The Panel also supports any members who wish to donate any of their allowances through a 'Give as you earn' scheme.

- 10.3 **The Panel recommends that where a member ceases to be a member of Buckinghamshire Council, or ceases to occupy a role attracting an SRA, that the member only receives pro-rata payment for the period that they are entitled to receive an allowance. The authority may require that such part of any allowance as relates to any such period be repaid to the authority where an overpayment is made.**

## **11. Emerging Governance Structure**

- 11.1 The Panel received evidence that the governance structure would continue to evolve over time and that these would be matters for the Buckinghamshire Council and not the shadow council. Specifically, this would include how the culture of the new council would evolve.
- 11.2 The Panel has made its recommendations on the information made available to it as of January 2020 and recognises change will occur as the new Council evolves.
- 11.3 Given that change was likely during the formative years of the Council, the Panel recommends an early review of allowances is undertaken at a time considered appropriate by members. For example, after one or two years following the current review. If the early review takes place after one year then the Council could index link allowances to CPI or the officer's annual pay award, whichever is the lower. Following the early review, a scheme of allowances could then be index linked for up to four years to tie in with the election cycle for the new Council. It is further recognised that following a Boundary Commission review during the first 5 years of the Council, it is likely the number of members would reduce for the elections in 2025, at that point a further review would be necessary to establish how responsibilities would change.

## **12. Member Performance, Accountability and Transparency**

- 12.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel is mindful that a key objective behind the formation of the new unitary Buckinghamshire Council is to realise cost savings and reduce the overall financial burden on the residents of the County. The original unitary business case set a budget of £1,927,000 to cover Members' Allowances, however the Secretary of State's decision to set the number of members at 147 has substantially eroded the targeted savings of £635,000.
- 12.2 The scheme put forward by Members totalled £2,409,420. This provides a saving when compared to the current total of allowances paid by all existing councils. The Scheme recommended by the Panel totals £2,371,220. The actual amount will depend on how roles are actually filled.
- 12.3 The flat rate Basic Allowance scheme in operation allows Members to receive not inconsiderable remuneration by automatic right as they are permitted to receive allowances by simply being a Member. The only legal requirement is that a Member must attend a formal meeting of the Council not less than once every six months.
- 12.4 The Panel is keen to establish the principle of enhanced transparency and accountability for the payment and receipts of allowances by all Members of the Buckinghamshire Council. It is recognised that it is difficult to develop

meaningful performance measures and even more difficult to enforce any such measures but there should be a means to hold Members to account if they are not undertaking the duties that are reasonably expected of them. It may well be a reiterative process that takes time to become effective. The Panel proposes that its recommendations on the scope and levels of allowances should only be accepted as part of a wider package that includes taking up the accompanying recommendations on Member performance. The Panel does not accept that the Council can take up one without the other. It will also be a further means by which the Panel in the future can assess the effectiveness of Members.

- 12.5 The Panel considers that electors would expect that a Member should only be entitled to claim the full basic allowance, or where relevant special allowance, should that Member attend a minimum of, for example, between 50% and 60% of Full Council meetings, Committee meetings or Scrutiny meetings that they are appointed to over each financial year. The Panel recognises that such a measure could only be put into effect through a voluntary claw-back scheme.

### **Enhancing Performance, Accountability and Transparency**

- 12.6 The Panel is convinced of the need to ensure that its recommendations relating to levels of allowances are intrinsically linked to the Council adopting mechanisms to enhance Member performance, accountability and transparency. The mechanisms are presented below in a hierarchical fashion, increasing in severity as one goes down the list.

### **Publishing Attendance Records**

- 12.7 As part of the general statement of performance the Panel believes that remuneration should involve a degree of sharpened accountability by the publication in appropriate forums such as Council web pages, local libraries, and parish halls, etc, of Members' attendance records. The Panel understands that the Buckinghamshire Council does intend to publish attendance records on the website. The Panel recommends that the publication of attendances by Members should include provision for valid absences, such as attending constituent duties, illness and/or representing the Council externally.

### **Member Statement of Activities**

- 12.8 The Panel also recommends that Members have the opportunity to fill in a pro forma on a periodic basis to allow them to give an account of their activities outside the Council, including an analysis of case work that they undertake in their wards, as well as attendance at formal meetings. All Members are likely to have access to a laptop and the Council intranet, with their own webpage, accompanied by appropriate training. It is relatively simple for each Member to write and publish their activity statements on their web page. These activity statements could then be used by electors and other interested parties to

evaluate the performance of Members in areas of activity that cannot be captured by the publication of attendance records.

### **Member Role Profiles – a Compact with the Electorate**

12.9 The Panel recommends that the Council adopt Member Role Profiles. These Role Profiles should form the basis of a role and accountability statement, an increasingly common practice in many authorities. They should be utilised to make explicit the respective roles, duties, responsibilities and competencies expected from Members and post holders. They should contain minimum performance measures that Members are expected to reach such as: the scope and type of committees etc, that a Member is expected to be on, such as a Scrutiny Panel.

- The minimum number of meetings a Member is expected to attend, e.g. at least 50% or 60%?
- That they should be expected to attend an approved duty at least every 3 rather than 6 months so they cannot meet their attendance requirements by frontloading within an intensive period.
- That Members are expected to take part in an individual Training and Development programme with the aim of increasing their own personal skills and capacity. Through the extensive publicity of Members duties and expected inputs, other elected Members and the public can be informed on what is to be expected from being elected.

12.10 To give further effect to the role profiles, a Compact with the Electorate' could be developed which Members are asked to sign. Such compacts are ultimately difficult to enforce but it makes an explicit link between allowances received and a specific set of tasks and duties a Member is expected to undertake. Members cannot claim they did not know what they are expected to do and moreover it provides moral leverage for the rest of the Council to utilise.

### **Allowance Claw-back Scheme**

12.11 Some authorities have a claw back scheme. For legal reasons it has to be adhered to on a 'voluntary' basis. Essentially this mechanism 'fines' a Member if they do not meet a target of attending a set percentage of meetings (often 50-60% or more). It is pointed out that in the few authorities where claw back has been adopted it is rarely invoked and appears to have limited value. Nonetheless, the Panel received evidence that the Council would appreciate having such a mechanism as part of the allowances' scheme even if it has to be



voluntary arrangement. Thus, the Panel recommends the Council adopt a claw back mechanism. As a voluntary process the claw back is probably best implemented through the group system. The Panel also recommends that the minimum standards the Council adopts for claw back to be activated should not be seen as a substitute for non-performance. Members should not be paying the claw back fine as way of circumventing their duties.

**12.12 The Panel recommends that the Council puts in place the following measures to enhance performance, accountability and transparency:**

- a) The publication of attendance records for Members at Full Council, Committee meetings and Scrutiny committees**
- b) Provision to Members of the opportunity to publish a periodic statement of activities**
- c) Adoption of role profiles for each Member in order to make clear both to the Members and electors what is expected of them**
- d) Introduction of an allowance claw-back scheme.**

### **13. Town and Parish Council allowances**

- 13.1 In addition to considering a scheme for Buckinghamshire Council, the Panel also considered recommendations to Town and Parish Councils across Buckinghamshire.
- 13.2 All Towns and Parishes were contacted by email in September 2019 and invited to submit representations and details of their respective schemes. 24 responses were received.
- 13.3 From the responses received it is evident that many Parish Councils pay no allowances and that the role of a Town or Parish Councillor is very much community based and time spent performing Parish Councillor duties was often viewed as voluntary. There is a wide range of towns and parishes across Buckinghamshire, with large town council's including Aylesbury, Buckingham and Chesham, amongst others through to small, rural, parishes who serve a relatively small electorate.
- 13.4 None of the responses indicate a need for any significant change to any respective scheme, although two respondents did make the panel aware that parishes would likely face increased pressures from services being devolved from Buckinghamshire Council.
- 13.5 The Panel believes that a sensible way to set a scheme would be to base recommended allowances around percentages of the unitary basic allowance which increases on the size of the electorate. This has been an approach used previously.
- 13.6 Towns and Parishes may choose to adopt recommendations for all members, or for the Chairman only. Where all members of a Parish receive a BA, the Chairman could receive a higher amount, up to twice that of the recommended basic allowance.
- 13.7 The Panel wishes to make clear that it is not recommending all towns and parishes pay an allowance to its members but recommends that those who do have regard to the panel's recommendations.
- 13.8 Further, the Panel recommends that Town and Parish Councils pay travel and subsistence allowances at the same rates as Buckinghamshire Council.

**13.9 (i) The Panel recommends that where Towns and Parishes choose to implement a scheme of allowances they have regard to the below table. Towns and Parishes may choose to adopt recommendations for all members, or for the Chairman only. Where all members of a Parish receive a BA, the Chairman could receiver an amount up to twice that of the recommended allowance.**

<b>Electorate</b>	<b>% of Unitary Basic (£13,000)</b>	<b>Amount per Councillor £ (up to)</b>
<b>0-2500</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>£195</b>
<b>2501 - 5000</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>£325</b>
<b>5001 - 10000</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>£455</b>
<b>10001 - 15000</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>£585</b>
<b>15001 - 20000</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>£715</b>
<b>20001 - 25000</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>£845</b>
<b>25001 and above</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>£1,170</b>

**(ii) The Panel recommends that Towns and Parishes follow the Buckinghamshire Council scheme when setting travel and subsistence allowances.**