



**A REVIEW OF
MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES
FOR
ELMBRIDGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**THE REPORT BY THE
INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL
SEPTEMBER 2011**

South East Employers
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FOREWORD

This report has been produced for Elmbridge Borough Council as part of the Council's requirement to receive independent advice from its statutory advisory panel on members' allowances. The membership of the Panel on this occasion was Susie Bonfield (Policy Officer, South East Employers) (Chair), Dennis Frost (who has lived in Elmbridge for over 25 years and works for one of the London boroughs), Choudhury Ahmed (a doctor by profession, living in Elmbridge Borough for the last 20 years) and Gordon Manickam (local resident and Assistant Director, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills).

The Panel was asked to carry out a 'light touch' review of the current scheme of allowances. Their report is attached.

The Panel would like to thank Tracey Hulse, Principal Committee and Member Services Officer at Elmbridge Borough Council for all her assistance.

The Panel would also like to record its gratitude to the Members and Officers of Elmbridge Borough Council who provided information for the Panel's consideration.

Susie Bonfield
Chair,
Independent Remuneration Panel

1. Introduction and Terms of Reference

A light touch review of the Elmbridge BC members' allowances scheme was conducted by the Independent Remuneration Panel at the request of the council, mindful of the fact that the Panel had undertaken an interim assessment of allowances in March 2010 and a further light touch review in November 2010.

The Panel met at the Civic Centre in Esher on 28th September 2011. We were able to consider information obtained from questionnaires completed by councillors, from interviews conducted with councillors and from conversations with officers (Andrew Cooper, Head of Finance, and Tracey Hulse).

We interviewed Councillors Rachael Lake, Mrs Christine Elmer, Mrs Janet Turner, John O'Reilly and Barry Fairbank.

The Panel took account of the statutory guidance governing Members' Allowances, in particular the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

2. Methodology

Following the request to conduct a light touch review of allowances, the Panel asked for a questionnaire to be circulated to all Elmbridge councillors. The purpose of the questionnaire was to ascertain from councillors how much time they were currently spending in their role as an elected member, what their views were on the current scheme of allowances, and whether there were any changes they would like to see introduced.

The Panel was very disappointed at the level of response to the questionnaire – only seven responses were received, from a potential total of sixty. However, the Panel were satisfied that all councillors had been given the opportunity to comment.

A copy of the questionnaire is provided at **Appendix One**.

The Panel also looked at the current level of allowances paid in Elmbridge in comparison to other local authorities in the Region. Details of allowances paid to other borough and district councils in Surrey are provided at **Appendix Two**. This information is extracted from an annual survey conducted by South East Employers.

3. The Panel's Considerations and Recommendations

Following close consideration of the responses to the questionnaire together with issues arising from their interviews with councillors, the Panel gave particular attention to the following:

- **A Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Chairman of the Performance and Finance Standing Panel.**

The Panel heard a very strong case for the introduction of a new SRA for the position of Chairman of the Council's Finance Panel. We learnt that the Panel plays an important role in scrutinising the performance and efficiency of the council, and has become a far more significant body over the last year. We learnt that there was much to understand and master with regard to the business of this particular Panel and that the role of the Panel Chairman was a demanding one. It was suggested that the workload and

responsibility of this position was on a par with that of the Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Panel recommends that a Special Responsibility Allowance of £3,000 be paid to the Chairman of the Performance and Finance Standing Panel, with effect from the start of the next municipal year. However, the Panel recommends that this new allowance be kept under review, to ensure that the workload of this body and the role of its Chairman remain at a similar level to present. To assist this future consideration, the Panel also recommends that a brief job description be produced for this role and, in addition, for all those positions attracting payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance.

- **The SRA for Vice-Chairmen.**

There was a view expressed that remuneration for the role of Vice Chairman should be abolished. However, this was a minority view, and the Panel learnt from other sources that the role of Vice Chairman was in fact a valuable one, and that each Vice Chairman currently in receipt of an SRA was deserving of remuneration. Production of a brief job description (see above) will assist with the monitoring and reviewing of the role.

- **A separate IT allowance for Councillors.**

The Panel considered a request regarding additional resources for IT and associated costs, such as toner cartridges, but noted that the Basic Allowance included an element to cover IT costs.

- **An increase to the mileage allowance.**

The Panel considered a request to increase the mileage allowance but there appeared to be little support for this.

4. Conclusions

The Panel recommends that, with the exception of an SRA for the Chairman of the Performance and Finance Standing Panel, no changes be made to the current system of allowances. We have carefully considered all the comments made and heard no compelling evidence to raise allowances from their current levels.

The Panel is also of the view that the very low response rate to the questionnaire suggests that Members are largely content with the current level of allowances.

The Panel would however like to draw the Council's attention to a couple of issues which, although are outside the Panel's immediate remit, were highlighted during the course of our deliberations. These are:

- **Better publicity for the role and work of the councillor**

The Panel has been made aware of the hard work and long hours put in by councillors and would like to see a better public awareness and understanding of what a councillor does. This could be achieved through liaison with schools, a brief pamphlet and videos linked to the council's website.

Another possibility could be interviews in the local paper or a stand at local events to promote the different roles and responsibilities of a councillor.

The Panel would be interested to learn what is being done at present in this respect, and whether it is possible to improve this, with little increase to costs.

- **Better knowledge management**

The Panel heard that in their capacity as representatives of Elmbridge Borough Council, councillors attend numerous meetings of outside bodies. However, information gleaned from these meetings is not always shared as widely or as well as it might be. The Panel therefore wondered if the Council could consider how knowledge sharing amongst councillors might be improved, perhaps by circulating minutes from such meetings – again, whilst avoiding any major financial implications.



**Members' Allowances -
Questionnaire**

1. How many hours on average do you spend each week on council business?	_____ hours
2. In a typical week, how will this time be spent? Please complete the details below:	
a) Attending meetings (including travelling)	_____ hours
b) Community representation	_____ hours
c) Case work (dealing with particular issues in your ward)	_____ hours
d) Research	_____ hours
e) Other (please specify)	_____ hours
3. Do you incur any significant costs which you believe are not covered by your present allowance?	YES / NO If YES , please provide details
4. Government guidance states that "it is important that some element of the work of Members continues to be voluntary". As part of their deliberations, Independent Remuneration Panels will assess what Public Service Discount should apply to the basic allowance. That is the percentage of their time Councillors expect to give without any financial remuneration.	
What do you feel is an acceptable amount of time to be given, unremunerated – expressed as a percentage?	_____ %

5. The present level of Basic Allowance payable to all Councillors is £4,245. Do you think this is appropriate?	YES / NO
If NO , should it be higher or lower?	HIGHER / LOWER
If you are able, please indicate an appropriate level	£_____
<p>6. Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) are currently paid as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader of the Council £12,000 • Other Cabinet Members £6,000 • Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee £6,000 • Vice-Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee £3,000 • Chairman of Planning Committee £5,000 • Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee £1,140 • Chairmen of Area Planning Sub-Committees £3,590 • Vice-Chairmen of Area Planning Sub-Committees £800 • Chairman of Licensing Committee £4,075 • Vice-Chairman of Licensing Committee £930 • Chairman of Audit and Standards Committee £3,590 • Group Leaders - per Councillor £25 	
Would you like to see any changes made to these allowances?	YES / NO If YES , please provide details
Would you like to see any new SRAs introduced?	YES / NO If YES , please provide details
7. Carer's Allowance The Dependent Carer's Allowance is currently set at £5.93 per hour. Should this rate be increased?	YES / NO If YES , please can you suggest a new amount:

<p>8. Travel and Subsistence</p> <p>The current scheme is attached.</p> <p>Do you have any comments on the current scheme for members?</p>	<p>YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, please provide details</p>
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If you have any other comments on Members' Allowances, please detail below:

Name _____

Dated _____

SCHEDULE 3 - RATES FOR TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE

The following travel and subsistence rates apply where an approved duty is performed and the amounts of the allowances are:

TRAVEL	RATE			NOTE
Public Transport – Rail	2nd class or any available cheap rate			Note (a) Warrants available from Payroll Officer
Public Transport – Bus	Ordinary fare or any available cheap rate			
Other Transport – Ship	1st class			Note (a)
Other Transport – Plane	Ordinary fare or any available cheap rate			Note (b)
Cycle Allowance	25 pence			Rate per mile
Motor Cycle (unchanged)	<251cc	251cc-500cc	>500cc	
	27 pence	35.5 pence	39.2 pence	Rate per mile Note (c)
Own Motor Vehicle	<1000cc	1000cc-1199cc	>1199cc	
(2010/11 rates)	46.9 pence	52.2 pence	65.0 pence	Rate per mile Note (c)
Taxi-cab	Actual fare and any reasonable gratuity			Emergency / no public transport Note (d)
Hired Motor Vehicle	Not exceeding own vehicle rate unless body approve rate to an amount not exceeding actual cost of hiring			Excludes taxi cab
SUBSISTENCE				
>4 hours before 11am	Breakfast allowance £6.88			Notes (e), (f)
>4 hours including 12 noon to 2pm	Lunch allowance £9.50			Notes (e), (f)
>4 hours including 3pm to 6pm	Tea allowance £3.76			Note (e)
>4 hours ending after 7pm	Evening meal allowance £11.76			Notes (e), (f)
Overnight absence	Out of Pocket expenses £5.28 per night			Note (g)

NOTES:

- (a) The rate may be increased by supplementary allowances not exceeding expenditure actually incurred for:
 - (i) on Pullman Car or similar supplements, reservation of seats and deposit or portorage of luggage; and
 - (ii) on sleeping accommodation engaged by the Member for an overnight journey, subject, however, to reduction by one-third of any subsistence allowance payable for that night.
- (b) Not to exceed rate applicable to travel by appropriate alternative means of transport together with an allowance equivalent to the amount of any saving in subsistence allowance.
- (c) The rate may be increased by not more than the amount of any expenditure incurred on tolls, ferries or parking fees, including overnight garaging. This equates to rates agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services.
- (d) Where not a case of urgency or public transport exists, the amount of the fare for travel by appropriate public transport.
- (e) All subsistence rates shall be reduced by an appropriate amount in respect of any meal provided free of charge. This equates to rates agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services.
- (f) Where main meals are taken on trains during a period for which there is an entitlement to a day subsistence allowance, the reasonable cost of the meals (including VAT) may be reimbursed in full as an alternative, subject to the time limits shown above.
- (g) Cost of overnight accommodation will be paid directly by the Council.

These rates shown are also applicable to Elmbridge Officers and will be amended should these rates change.

SEE Members' Allowances Survey 2010 - 2011

Council Name	Type of Council	Population	Basic Allowance for 2010/11	Leader	Deputy Leader	Cabinet Member / Portfolio Holder	Chair Audit Committee	Licensing Committee Chair	Deputy Chair Licensing Committee	Planning Committee Chair	Deputy Chair Planning Committee	Members of Planning Committee
Elmbridge BC	D/ B	121,936	£4,245	£12,000		£6,000	£3,590	£4,075	£930	£5,000	£1,140	
Epsom and Ewell BC	D/ B	72,700	£3,308					£1,654		£1,654	£414	£827
Guildford BC	D/ B	130,717	£4,655	£4,896	£1,224	£3,672		£3,060		£3,672		
Reigate and Banstead BC	D/ B	136,100	£5,072	£12,590	£10,282	£8,394		£500		£4,842		£715
Runnymede BC	D/ B	61,106	£2,335	£4,670	£1,168		£779	£1,168	£584	£4,086	£2,720	£1,361
Surrey Heath BC	D/ B	83,000	£4,752	£12,948		£4,320		£3,456	£1,728	£3,456	£1,728	
Tandridge DC	D/ B	79,300	£3,840	£2,789	£5,235			£6,629	£5,235	£6,629	£5,235	£539
Waverley BC	D/ B	116,000	£2,046	£6,156	£525	£2,085	£525	£1,563	£783	£783	£525	
Woking BC	D/ B	92,400	£7,115									

Average		100,107	£4,152	£8,007	£3,687	£4,894	£1,631	£2,763	£1,852	£3,765	£1,960	£861
Maximum		136,100	£7,115	£12,948	£10,282	£8,394	£3,590	£6,629	£5,235	£6,629	£5,235	£1,361
Minimum		61,106	£2,046	£2,789	£525	£2,085	£525	£500	£584	£783	£414	£539

Council Name	Type of Council	Standards Committee Chair	Standards Committee Co-optee	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair	Deputy Chair Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Overview and Scrutiny Co-optee	Chair / Civic Mayor	Deputy Chair/ Civic Mayor	Opposition Group Leader	Deputy Opposition Leader	Group Leader
Elmbridge BC	D/ B			£6,000	£3,000		£11,840	£2,320			
Epsom and Ewell BC	D/ B	£827	£414	£1,654				£827	£827		£1,654
Guildford BC	D/ B	£765		£3,060			£8,000	£1,100	£3,672		
Reigate and Banstead BC	D/ B		£500	£2,813			£12,100	£1,500			
Runnymede BC	D/ B	£779	£291	£2,335	£1,168		£10,000		£1,751		£1,751
Surrey Heath BC	D/ B		£1,728	£3,456	£1,380		£3,780	£1,300			£4,320
Tandridge DC	D/ B	£6,629		£6,629	£5,235		£2,789				
Waverley BC	D/ B										
Woking BC	D/ B										

Average		£2,250	£733	£3,707	£2,696		£8,085	£1,409	£2,083		£2,575
Maximum		£6,629	£1,728	£6,629	£5,235		£12,100	£2,320	£3,672		£4,320
Minimum		£765	£291	£1,654	£1,168		£2,789	£827	£827		£1,654