

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

**THE REPORT BY THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION
PANEL**

SEPTEMBER 2012

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 Independent Remuneration Panel (the Panel).

The membership of the Panel on this occasion was Susie Bonfield (formerly Policy Officer, South East Employers, now an independent consultant) (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 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 with the review.

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

Introduction and Terms of Reference.

This review of the members' allowances scheme was conducted by the Independent Remuneration Panel at the request of Elmbridge Borough Council. The Panel took into consideration previous reviews of the scheme, most recently the review undertaken in September 2011.

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

The Panel met at the Civic Centre in Esher on 24th September 2012 and considered information from a variety of sources – in particular:

- background information provided by the Council (including details of committee membership and the schedule of meetings for 2012/13)
- completed questionnaires received from councillors
- interviews conducted with councillors
- conversations with officers

We interviewed Councillors Chris Sadler, John O'Reilly, Barry Fairbank and Stuart Selleck.

We also spoke to Rob Moran (Chief Executive), Sarah Selvanathan (Strategic Director & Deputy Chief Executive) and Beverley Greenstein (Head of Executive and Member Services).

Methodology

A questionnaire was circulated to all Elmbridge councillors in advance of the Panel meeting. The purpose of the questionnaire (see Appendix A) was to ascertain how much time councillors were spending in their role as an elected member and whether they would like to see any changes to the current scheme of allowances.

Twelve responses were received (from a potential total of sixty), but the Panel was satisfied that all councillors had been given the opportunity to comment.

We also looked at the current level of allowances paid in Elmbridge in comparison to other district and borough councils in the South East region. This information was provided from an annual survey conducted by South East Employers. A copy of these results is provided at Appendix B.

The Panel's Considerations and Recommendations

We noted and considered the response of the Council following the recommendations made by the Panel when we met last September. (A copy of that report is appended at C).

We were particularly interested to hear from Beverley Greenstein about how the Council is working to raise the public's awareness and understanding of the role of the councillor. Her contribution in this respect is very much appreciated.

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:

Childcare and Dependent Carers' Allowance

A number of councillors, via their completed questionnaires, drew the Panel's attention to this allowance, which is payable to councillors to assist with the care of children, elderly, disabled or sick relatives whilst they (the councillors) are performing an approved duty. We noted that the rate currently paid (on the production of an invoice) is £6.08 per hour, with the maximum amount payable capped at 25% of the annual Basic Allowance in any year.

The Panel noted that the hourly amount was slightly lower than some of Elmbridge's neighbours – Guildford, for example, pay £6.94 per hour, Woking £7.50 per hour, and both with the provision that a higher rate may be paid for dependent care, according to the particular circumstances.

Throughout this review, the Panel were concerned that no aspect of the allowances scheme should deter someone from standing as a councillor in Elmbridge. With this in mind:

The Panel recommends that consideration be given to the:

- a) **remuneration level of Childcare and Dependent Carers' Allowance with regard to the adequacy of the current hourly rate in covering reasonable expenses incurred; and**
- b) **whether there should, in fact, be a higher rate for Dependent Care, where specialised nursing skills may be required and is more costly to hire).**

Furthermore, we ask that consideration be given, when publicising the role of a councillor (see above) that potential candidates be made aware of the availability of financial assistance for those with caring responsibilities.

Mileage Allowance

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

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

The Panel recalled that at the last review (September 2011) it had heard a very strong case for the introduction of a new SRA for the position of Chairman of the Council's Performance and Finance Panel (PFP). Consequently, the Panel had recommended that such an SRA be introduced; we had recommended that the allowance for this particular role should be £3000 per annum, given that the workload and responsibility of this position was on a par with that of the Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (a position which currently receives an SRA of £3000 per annum).

We noted the decision taken by Elmbridge Council at the meeting held on 7 December 2011 that the introduction of this new SRA be deferred to the Municipal Year 2013/14.

The Panel heard first from the Council Officers who stated that the PFP continued to perform a valuable role and was of "increasing importance" in scrutinising the performance, expenditure and efficiency of the Council. The work of the PFP is now been extended to focus on how to improve on the existing efficiencies. This view was echoed by a number of the councillors we interviewed.

In view of this the Panel remained assured that the role of Chairman of the PFP is a responsible and demanding position. Therefore we would echo our previous recommendation regarding the introduction of a SRA for the position of Chairman of the Performance and Finance Standing Panel.

Conclusions

Whilst we were disappointed by the low response to the questionnaire, the Panel believes that this reflects the lack of appetite for change in relation to the current scheme of members' allowances.

We noted from the responses in the questionnaires received, that hours worked by the councillors per week ranged from 10 to 37.5 averaging around 18.5 with a number of them doing over 25 hours.

The Panel is aware that there has been no increase to the level of allowances paid to members here in recent years. We noted that the Basic Allowance payable to all Elmbridge councillors is slightly below the regional average. The Panel would like to draw attention to the possibility that because allowances are falling in real terms through inflation, this may not attract potential candidate from the wider community; especially those who may need the allowance to compensate for any loss of earnings. Also, it might be more difficult in the future to seek a higher than average increase to make up for "lost ground".

Based on our considerations, the only recommendation the Panel wishes to make at this particular time is in relation to the Carer's Allowance.

Independent Remuneration Panel

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?	<p>YES / NO</p> <p>If YES, please provide details</p>
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 • Chairman of Performance and Finance Standing Panel Deferred to 2013/14 • 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 £6.08 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	
Own Motor Vehicle (2010/11 rates)	<1000cc	1000cc-1199cc	>1199cc	
Taxi-cab	46.9 pence	52.2 pence	65.0 pence	Rate per mile Note (c)
Hired Motor Vehicle	Actual fare and any reasonable gratuity			Emergency / no public transport Note (d)
	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) 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 2011 - 2012

Council Name	Population (approx)	Basic Allowance for 2011/12	Leader	Deputy Leader	Cabinet Member / Portfolio Holder	Cabinet Member / Non Portfolio Holder	Chair Audit Committee	Licensing Committee Chair	Deputy Chair Licensing Committee	Members of Licensing Committee	Planning Committee Chair	Deputy Chair Planning Committee	Members of Planning Committee
Arun District Council	150,000	£4,870.00	£14,196.00	£10,400.00	£8,320.00		£3,750.00	£5,550.00	£1,832.00	£250.00	£6,000.00	£1,980.00	£750.00
Ashford Borough Council	114,100	£4,292.28	£14,040.52	£9,350.99	£7,020.26		£4,680.17	£1,404.05			£5,616.21	£1,872.07	
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	166,000	£6,602.75	£22,018.00	£14,668.00	£11,009.00		£7,330.00	£3,302.00	£825.00		£7,330.00	£1,832.00	
Canterbury City Council	149,100	£4,710.00	£18,114.00	£6,342.00			£906.00	£4,539.00	£4,077.00				
Chichester District Council	133,500	£3,900.00	£12,724.00	£5,091.00	£4,452.00		£4,452.00	£4,452.00		£276.00	£4,452.00		
Crawley Borough Council	100,000	£5,949.00	£14,281.00	£7,138.00	£7,138.00		£2,380.00	£5,949.00	£1,166.00		£5,949.00	£2,380.00	
Dartford Borough Council	93,600	£4,765.00	£27,857.00	£16,714.00	£8,357.00		£2,090.00						
East Hampshire District Council	110,000	£4,500.00	£16,000.00	£2,767.00	£4,150.00			£692.00		£692.00	£4,150.00	£1,383.00	
Eastbourne Borough Council	98,500	£2,559.00	£3,840.00	£2,559.00	£2,559.00			£1,278.00			£1,920.00	£1,278.00	£1,278.00
Eastleigh Borough Council	122,700	£5,685.00	£19,145.00	£8,853.00	£7,588.00		£2,529.00				£3,162.00	£790.00	
Elmbridge Borough Council	130,000	£4,245.00	£12,000.00		£6,000.00			£4,075.00	£930.00		£5,000.00	£1,140.00	
Epsom and Ewell Borough Council	74,300	£3,308.31						£992.49			£2,315.82		£330.83
Fareham Borough Council	110,967	£6,465.60	£19,396.80	£10,776.00			£4,041.00	£6,735.00	£538.80		£9,698.40	£808.20	
Gosport Borough Council	91,341	£5,630.00	£13,078.00					£4,188.00			£4,188.00		
Gravesham Borough Council	99,600	£3,447.00	£20,260.00	£3,447.00	£3,447.00		£3,447.00	£3,447.00	£1,206.00		£3,447.00	£1,206.00	
Guildford Borough Council	135,700	£4,655.00	£4,896.00	£1,224.00	£3,672.00			£3,060.00			£3,672.00		
Hart District Council	91,200	£3,735.00	£15,153.00	£6,019.00	£5,465.00		£1,668.00	£1,668.00	£756.00		£3,031.00	£1,010.00	
Havant Borough Council	120,000	£5,350.00	£14,800.00	£8,880.00	£8,140.00			£2,960.00	£978.00		£5,920.00	£1,973.00	
Lewes District Council	96,396	£2,975.00	£13,799.00		£5,519.00	£3,311.00	£4,140.00				£4,140.00	£690.00	£497.00
Maidstone Borough Council	149,800	£4,666.00	£23,326.00		£11,663.00		£1,166.00	£2,332.00			£5,831.00		
Mid Sussex District Council	133,000	£4,501.00	£20,596.00		£8,238.00		£1,930.00	£977.00			£4,501.00		
Mole Valley District Council	80,287	£4,098.00	£6,500.00		£3,000.00		£2,500.00	£250.00			£2,400.00		
Reigate and Banstead Borough Council	136,100	£5,072.00	£12,590.00	£10,282.00	£8,394.00			£500.00			£4,842.00		£715.00
Rother District Council	90,566	£4,237.00	£12,376.00	£3,455.00	£2,692.00			£1,969.00			£2,692.00		
Runnymede Borough Council	61,106	£2,335.00	£4,670.00	£1,168.00				£1,168.00	£584.00		£4,086.00	£2,720.00	£1,361.00
Rushmoor Borough Council	92,000	£4,950.00	£12,500.00	£8,400.00	£7,400.00		£1,380.00						
Sevenoaks District Council	114,100	£3,698.18	£11,944.45	£5,972.22	£5,972.22		£1,696.19			£202.80	£2,551.74	£1,450.53	£202.80
Shepway District Council	105,000	£3,867.00	£21,245.00	£9,611.00	£8,807.00		£3,956.00	£1,388.00	£396.00				
South Bucks District Council	67,500	£4,100.00	£10,250.00	£4,510.00	£4,510.00		£680.00	£3,280.00			£3,280.00		
Spelthorne Borough Council	91,000	£3,938.00	£9,037.00	£6,001.00	£3,012.00		£3,012.00	£3,012.00			£3,012.00		
Surrey Heath Borough Council	83,000	£4,752.00	£12,948.00		£4,320.00			£3,456.00	£1,728.00		£3,456.00	£1,728.00	
Swale Borough Council	135,000	£3,343	£11,700.00	£7,020.00	£7,020.00	£3,510.00	£1,170.00				£3,510.00		£1,170.00
Test Valley Borough Council	114,000	£6,250	£11,850.00	£8,100.00	£7,550.00		£2,050.00	£4,700.00	£950.00		£4,700.00	£950.00	
Thanet District Council	131,000	£4,360.00	£18,082.00	£10,776.00	£7,990.00		£5,204.00	£3,216.00	£805.00		£5,204.00	£1,216.00	
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	112,400	£5,076.00	£10,674.00		£8,067.00		£2,538.00	£2,538.00	£1,008.00		£5,076.00	£1,269.00	
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	107,600	£5,279.00	£16,750.00		£8,990.00		£1,980.00	£1,980.00	£495.00		£5,279.00	£1,320.00	
Waverley Borough Council	116,000	£2,406	£6,156.00	£525.00	£2,085.00		£525.00	£1,563.00	£783.00		£783.00	£525.00	
Wealden District Council	146,000	£4,215.00	£12,330.00		£5,090.00			£2,600.00			£3,855.00	£1,285.00	
West Oxfordshire District Council	100,000	£4,350.00	£19,575.00	£13,050.00	£10,875.00		£1,100.00	£1,100.00			£5,450.00		
Winchester City Council	113,300	£5,580.00	£16,734.00	£9,129.00	£7,605.00			£3,042.00			£7,605.00	£2,280.00	
Woking Borough Council	92,400	£7,115.00											
Wycombe District Council	161,000	£4,515.00	£15,800.00	£11,286.00	£9,029.00		£1,129.00	£1,129.00	£282.00		£4,515.00	£1,129.00	£282.00

112,361	£4,532.07	£14,330.79	£7,450.47	£6,531.82	£3,410.50	£2,622.48	£2,699.76	£1,074.43	£355.20	£4,395.14	£1,425.62	£731.85
61,106	£2,335.00	£3,840.00	£525.00	£2,085.00	£3,311.00	£525.00	£250.00	£282.00	£202.80	£783.00	£525.00	£202.80
166,000	£7,115.00	£27,857.00	£16,714.00	£11,663.00	£3,510.00	£7,330.00	£6,735.00	£4,077.00	£692.00	£9,698.40	£2,720.00	£1,361.00

SEE Members' Allowances Sur

Council Name	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	Opposition Spokesperson	Others
Arun District Council	£1,500.00		£4,870.00	£1,607.00		£8,320.00	£2,745.00	£3,917.00				
Ashford Borough Council	£1,404.05		£5,616.21	£1,872.07				£6,603.60				Chair of Policy
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	£2,204.00	£400.00	£7,330.00	£1,832.00		£4,397.00		£7,330.00		£3,299.00		
Canterbury City Council	£906.00	£453.00	£4,539.00					£4,292.00	£2,861.00			
Chichester District Council	£608.00		£4,452.00			£4,452.00		£5,091.00				
Crawley Borough Council												Maximum of 2
Dartford Borough Council		£570.00	£2,090.00		£570.00			£8,357.00	£5,014.00	£234.00		
East Hampshire District Council	£2,767.00		£2,767.00			£2,767.00		£2,767.00				
Eastbourne Borough Council	£3,604.00	£2,980.00	£1,278.00			£2,559.00	£1,278.00	£1,920.00	£1,278.00			Chair of
Eastleigh Borough Council	£1,581.00	£595.00	£2,529.00	£633.00		£5,000.00		£5,059.00		£5,059.00		
Elmbridge Borough Council			£6,000.00	£3,000.00								
Epsom and Ewell Borough Council	£992.49		£1,654.16									
Fareham Borough Council	£3,232.80		£7,543.20	£808.20				£6,465.60			£269.40	
Gosport Borough Council												
Gravesham Borough Council			£3,447.00	£1,206.00		£10,790.00	£3,140.00	£3,447.00				
Guildford Borough Council	£765.00		£3,060.00			£8,000.00	£1,100.00	£3,672.00				
Hart District Council	£1,136.00	£219.00	£1,981.00	£756.00		£2,952.00	£1,018.00	£1,981.00				
Havant Borough Council	£1,480.00	£321.00	£5,920.00	£1,973.00				£600.00				
Lewes District Council			£3,311.00			£1,035.00		£4,140.00				Chair of
Maidstone Borough Council	£1,166.00	£331.00	£5,831.00			£2,000.00	£800.00					Chair of
Mid Sussex District Council	£475.00	£713.00	£5,151.00			£6,572.00	£2,251.00					Better'
Mole Valley District Council												
Reigate and Banstead Borough Council		£500.00	£2,813.00			£12,100.00	£1,600.00					Chairman of
Rother District Council	£1,969.00	£786.00	£2,692.00			£3,300.00	£550.00					
Runnymede Borough Council		£291.00	£2,335.00	£1,168.00		£10,000.00		£1,751.00		£1,751.00		
Rushmoor Borough Council	£1,380.00							£3,000.00				
Sevenoaks District Council	£984.00	£479.00	£1,592.94	£970.93								
Shepway District Council			£3,956.00			£6,228.00	£1,187.00					
South Bucks District Council			£3,280.00			£3,280.00	£1,350.00			£680.00		
Spelthorne Borough Council	£1,000.00	£500.00	£3,012.00			£13,800.00	£3,900.00	£3,012.00				
Surrey Heath Borough Council		£1,728.00	£3,456.00	£1,380.00						£4,320.00		
Swale Borough Council			£3,218.00			£3,260.00	£1,305.00	£3,218.00		£3,218.00		Labour Group
Test Valley Borough Council	£550.00		£6,250.00	£1,250.00		£2,800.00	£550.00	£2,800.00				Chairman of
Thanet District Council	£1,216.00	£139.00	£7,990.00	£3,216.00		£2,188.00	£1,530.00	£5,204.00	£2,304.00			Governance
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	£1,269.00		£6,258.00	£1,350.00				£2,370.00		£6,990.00		Chair General
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	£1,980.00		£5,279.00	£1,320.00				£2,748.00				
Waverley Borough Council												
Wealden District Council	£1,250.00		£3,445.00			£4,370.00	£1,080.00					
West Oxfordshire District Council	£2,100.00		£4,350.00			£4,350.00		£1,100.00				
Winchester City Council												
Woking Borough Council												
Wycombe District Council	£1,129.00		£3,386.00	£1,129.00		£18,700.00	£2,500.00	£2,107.00		£1,844.00		Cabinet

£1,486.47 £687.81 £4,076.64 £1,498.31 £570.00 £5,967.50 £1,640.24 £3,718.09 £2,864.25 £3,043.89 £269.40
£475.00 £139.00 £1,278.00 £633.00 £570.00 £1,035.00 £550.00 £600.00 £1,278.00 £234.00 £269.40
£3,604.00 £2,980.00 £7,990.00 £3,216.00 £570.00 £18,700.00 £3,900.00 £8,357.00 £5,014.00 £6,990.00 £269.40



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MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES
FOR
ELMBRIDGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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

South East Employers
Newfrith House
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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.