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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 22ND JANUARY 2025, AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

SUPPLEMENTARY PAPERS 2

10. **Independent Remuneration Panel Recommendations 2025/26** (Pages 3 - 14)

“The appendix containing the Independent Remuneration Panel report is republished due to an error in the drafting on the ‘Summary of Basic Award and SRA recommendations’ table. Some of the multipliers in the third column “Current Multiplier (Council Agreed)” were incorrect, however the actual monetary figures were correct.”

- 12i **Medium Term Financial Plan - Tranche 1 Budget including Fees and Charges (following consultation)** (Pages 15 - 18)

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20th January 2025

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Independent Remuneration Panel for Worcestershire District Councils

Annual Report and Recommendations for 2025/26

Bromsgrove District Council

December 2024

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Recommendations to the Council

The Independent Remuneration Panel recommends to Bromsgrove District Council the following:

- 1. A Basic Allowance for 2025/26 of £5,826, representing a 5.58% increase.**
- 2. A range of Special Responsibility Allowances as set out in Appendix 1**
- 3. That travel allowances for 2025/26 continue to be paid in accordance with the HMRC mileage allowance**
- 4. That subsistence allowances for 2025/26 remain unchanged**
- 5. That the Dependent Carer's Allowance remains unchanged**
- 6. That travel and subsistence payments made by Parish Councils to councillors (where they are paid) are made in accordance with the provisions set out in this report**

1. Introduction and Context

The Independent Remuneration Panel (the Panel) has been appointed by the Council in accordance with the Members' Allowances Regulations. The role of the Panel is to carry out reviews of the allowances paid to Councillors, as required by the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation.

The report sets out recommendations for the Basic Allowance (as recommended to be paid for all Councillors), the special responsibility allowances (for those councillors with additional responsibilities) and allowances for mileage, subsistence and for those with dependent carer responsibilities.

The purpose of such allowances is to enable people from all walks of life to become involved in local politics if they choose. This continues to remain an important consideration for the Panel when submitting its recommendations.

The Panel acknowledges, however, that in the current challenging financial climate there are difficult choices for the Council to make. The Council will need to 'have regard' to the recommendations of the Panel, but ultimately, it is for the Council to decide how or whether to adopt them in full or in part.

The Panel's recommendations are based on thorough research and benchmarking taking into account a range of comparative data as set out below.

2. Background Evidence and Research Undertaken

There is a range of market indicators on pay which can be used for comparison purposes. As background for the decisions taken by the Panel this year have:

- Analysed and considered the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) statistics for 2024 which set out a mean hourly wage rate for Worcestershire of £19.88
- Benchmarked the Basic Allowance against those paid within comparable local authorities to Bromsgrove as set out in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) 'nearest neighbours' list
- Taken account of the 2024/25 National Pay Award for the majority of Local Government employees
- Considered the Consumer Price Index information as of September 2024.

Details about these areas of research are set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

In determining a recommendation for the basic award for 2025/26, consideration has once again been given to the average number of hours spent by councillors on Council business. For 2025/26 this has again been informed by a time-recording exercise carried out by Worcester City Councillors in 2015, as updated by a similar exercise in 2022.

3. Comparative Spend on Allowances across Worcestershire 2023/24

As part of the research, consideration has been given to the Members' allowances budget for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances in the previous year (2023/24) as a cost per head of population for each Council, and also as a proportion of net revenue budget. This is set out in the table below:

Authority, population ¹ and number of Councillors	Total spend Basic Allowances	Total spend on SRA	SRA as a percentage of total Basic Allowance	Cost of total basic and SRA per head of population	Total of basic and SRA as a percentage of Net General Revenue Fund expenditure
	£	£	%	£	%
Bromsgrove DC (31) 100,569	148,081	71,593	48.35	2.18	Not available yet
Malvern Hills DC (31) 79,445	154,597	72,988	47.1	2.86	2.64
Redditch Borough (29) 85,568	136,335	98,584	72.31	2.75	Not available yet
Worcester City (35) 100,265	166,153	111,124	66.88	2.76	1.68
Wychavon (43) 131,084	216,664	101,993	47.07	2.43	1.51

4. Average Payment per Councillor across Worcestershire 2023/24

In addition to the above, the following table also sets out the average payment per member of each authority of the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances for the previous year (2023/24):

Average allowance per Member of each authority (Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances, 2023/24 figures)

Authority (number of Councillors)	Amount £
Bromsgrove District (31)	7,086.26
Malvern Hills District (31)	7,341.45
Redditch Borough (29)	8,100.66
Worcester City (35)	7,922.20
Wychavon District (43)	7,411

5. Consideration of allowances for the financial year 2025/26

a/ Basic Allowance

The Basic Allowance is paid to all Members of the Council to reflect:

- Their roles and responsibilities as Elected Members of the Council

¹ONS population estimates mid 2020. Totals for Basic and Special Responsibility allowances paid are as published by each authority for the 2023/24 financial year.

- Their time commitments, including the total average number of hours worked per week on Council business
- A public service discount of 40% to reflect that Councillors volunteer their time

Whilst each Council may set out role descriptions for Councillors, the Panel accepts that each Councillor will carry out that role differently, reflecting personal circumstances and local requirements.

In setting out its recommendations, the Panel considers the Basic Allowance to include Councillors' roles in Overview and Scrutiny, as any non-Executive member of the Council can contribute to this aspect of the Council's work. It is for this reason that the Panel does not recommend any Special Responsibility Allowance for members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Panel also considers that the Basic Allowance should cover the need for Councillors to use ICT and social media support and communication systems as part of their role. However, it is accepted that specific local decisions may be made about how ICT support is provided.

As indicated in section 2 of this report, in formulating its recommendations, the Panel has once again reviewed the levels of wage rates for Worcestershire as set out in the ASHE data and the benchmark information available from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) "nearest neighbours" authorities. Consideration has also been given to the nationally agreed pay award for local government employees for the financial year 2024/25 and the latest CPI (consumer price inflation) figure as of September 2024.

Based on all the above considerations, the Panel recommend a Basic Award of £5,826 for the financial year 2025/26. This again aligns with the increase in the average pay levels as reflected in the ASHE data whilst acknowledging the CPI increase, CIPFA data and Local Government Pay Awards. It represents a 5.58% increase on the previous year's recommendation.

The recommendation takes strong account of the ASHE data and is set at an appropriate level in the context of the local government pay award. The Panel is conscious of the current financial challenges but also mindful to avoid increasing any gap in allowances between Redditch Borough Council and its "nearest neighbours."

The research information used in the consideration of the Basic Allowance is set out in appendix 2.

b/ Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)

Special Responsibility Allowances are paid to a small number of Councillors to reflect responsibilities undertaken by them in addition to their day-to-day roles as Elected Representatives. Such allowances are paid in addition to the Basic Allowance and calculated as a multiplier of the Basic Allowance.

Any recommended changes in such allowances would be based on proposals made to the Panel each year and reflecting, for example changes in committee structures, new responsibilities or increases/decreases in existing responsibilities.

Upon request, the Panel reviewed a SRA to be paid to Licensing Committee members but having compared activity to that of the other councils, it did not feel

a change was required. There were no further requests for changes, so the recommended values for all SRAs remain unchanged for 2025/26.

The full list of recommended SRA multipliers and values is set out in Appendix 1.

c/ Mileage and Expenses

The Panel notes that the Council has used the HMRC flat rate for payment of mileage for all types of vehicles and recommends that this continues.

d/ Dependant Carer Allowance

The Panel notes that the Council's Scheme of Members' Allowances provides that Dependant Carer Allowances are payable to cover reasonable and legitimate costs incurred in attending approved duties and recommends that this provision continues.

e/ Allowances to Parish Councils

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Worcestershire District Councils acts as the Remuneration Panel for the Parish Councils in each District. This year the Panel has not been asked to make recommendations on any matters by any Parishes.

6. The Independent Remuneration Panel

This Council's Independent Remuneration Panel is set up on a joint basis with four of the other five District Councils in Worcestershire. Separate Annual Reports have been prepared for each Council. The members of the Panel are:

Tim Hunt (Chair) – Tim is a qualified journalist with more than 25 years' experience in media and communications. He spent seven years covering community and local authority news in Worcestershire and Warwickshire, including four as editor of two local newspapers, before going on to work in corporate communications and events. Tim now runs his own PR agency.

Susan Moxon (Vice Chair) - Susan has worked in the Education sector for over 20 years, working in schools in Warwickshire and Birmingham and then with the Department for Education, where she worked in the 6th form funding team, analysing data from incoming enquiries, mainly from schools and colleges regarding the calculation of their funding statements. She has acted as an independent observer at Teacher Disciplinary Hearings ensuring that the panel members followed procedures and were unbiased in their decision making. Previously she was an Exams Support Officer providing advice to schools and colleges in Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester about entering students for external exams and assessments, her particular area of expertise. She is currently Clerk to the Governing Bodies at two First Schools in Worcestershire and to two local charities. She organises meetings, manages the accounts and is the main point of contact with applicants, local providers and the Charity Commission.

Reuben Bergman – Reuben is a Fellow of the CIPD with significant senior HR leadership experience across a range of public sector organisations in both England and Wales. He currently runs a HR Consultancy Business in Worcestershire providing advice and support on managing change, employment law, HR policy development, mediation, management coaching and employee relations. Reuben has led successful equal pay reviews in three separate local authorities and is known for his successful work in managing change and developing effective employee relations. He is a qualified coach, mediator and a Shared Service architect.

Xenia Goudefroy – Xenia is a Management Accountant with experience in the financial controlling and forecasting for a range of companies in the private sector. She holds an Advanced Diploma in Management Accounting and has completed a Master's degree in Business Administration at University Vila Velha and in International Management at the Steinbeis University Berlin. As a focus topic of her thesis she has developed the order-to-cash process for new business models. Since she moved to the UK in 2017 in her free time she has been volunteering to help people in need and is also working as a volunteer at the Worcester fish-pass to help preserve the natural habitat of migrating species. She is fluent in three languages and enjoys learning new skills.

Caroline Murphy – Caroline has over 20 years' experience of working in public and voluntary sector organisations, including three West Midlands Local Authorities and the Civil Service. She was a senior Education Manager at Wolverhampton City Council until 2011. She has a wealth of experience at building partnerships. Caroline now works as freelance adviser supporting individuals and organisations with strategic management. Caroline is also an active Governor of a Special School and Vocational College in Wolverhampton and a trained Mediator.

7. Support and Thanks

The Panel has been advised and assisted by:

Claire Chaplin and Margaret Johnson from Worcester City Council
Darren Whitney and Jane Oyenuka from Bromsgrove & Redditch Councils
Mel Harris from Wychavon District Council
Bronwen Tompkins from Malvern Hills District Council

The Panel wishes to acknowledge its gratitude to these officers who have provided advice and guidance in a professional and dedicated manner.

Tim Hunt, Chair of Independent Remuneration Panel

Appendix 1

Independent Remuneration Panel for District Councils in Worcestershire

Summary of Basic Award and SRA recommendations

Role	Rec'd Multiplier 2024/25 (IRP)	Current Multiplier (Council Agreed)	Rec'd Allowance 2024/25 (IRP) £	Current Allowance 2024/25 (Council Agreed) £	Rec'd Multiplier 2025/26 (IRP)	Rec'd Allowance 2025/26 (IRP) £
Basic Allowance:	1	1	5,518	5,518	1	5,826
Special Responsibility Allowances:						
Leader	3	3	16,554	16,554	3	17,478
Deputy Leader	1.75	1.75	9,656.50	9,656.50	1.75	10,195
Executive Members (Cabinet Portfolio Holders)	1.5	1.5	8,277	8,277	1.5	8,739
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board	1.5	1.5	8,277	8,277	1.5	8,739
Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Task Groups	0.25	0.25	1,379.50	1,379.50	0.25	1,456.50
Chair of Audit, Standards and Governance Committee	0.25	0.25	1,379.50	1,379.50	0.25	1,456.50
Chair of Planning Committee	1	1	5,518	5,518	1	5,826
Chair of Licensing Committee	0.3	0.3	1,655.40	1,655.40	0.3	1,747.80
Political Group Leaders	0.25	0.25	1,379.50	1,379.50 Leaders of other political groups with 3 or more members (not applicable to the Leader of the Council)	0.25	1,456.50
Chairman of Appointments Committee (BDC only)	0.03	0.03	165.54 per meeting	165.54 per meeting	0.03	174.78 per meeting
Chairman of Electoral Matters Committee (BDC only)	0.03	0.03	165.54 per meeting	165.54 per meeting	0.03	174.78 per meeting

Chairman of Appeals Panel (BDC only)	0.03	0.03	165.54 per meeting	165.54 per meeting	0.03	174.78 per meeting
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Appendix 2

Independent Remuneration Panel for District Councils in Worcestershire

Summary of Research

a/ Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) “Nearest Neighbour” authorities’ tool.

No two Councils or sets of Councillors are the same. Developed to aid local authorities in comparative and benchmarking exercises, the CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Model adopts a scientific approach to measuring the similarity between authorities. Using the data, Bromsgrove’s “nearest neighbours” are:

- Roachford
- Stroud
- Lewes
- Tandridge
- Epping Forest
- Surrey Heath

Information on the level of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances was obtained to benchmark the levels of allowances recommended to the Council. The average basic award across all the “nearest neighbour” authorities was £6,232 as at December 2024.

b/ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) Data on Pay

[Earnings and hours worked, place of work by local authority: ASHE Table 7 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employment-and-labour/earnings-and-hours/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/ashe-table-7-office-for-national-statistics)

Published by the Office for National Statistics, the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) shows detailed information at District level about rates of pay. For benchmarking purposes, the Panel uses the levels for hourly rates of pay excluding overtime (£19.88 as at December 2024).

For benchmarking purposes, this is multiplied by 11 hours to give a weekly rate, then multiplied by 44.4 weeks to allow for holidays and then discounted by 40% to reflect the element of volunteering that each Councillor undertakes in the role.

The 11-hour multiplier is felt to reflect the average number of hours spent on Council business by frontline Councillors as reported in a previous survey of Worcester City Councillors in 2015 and updated in 2022. As a benchmark indicator this would produce a figure of £5,826 per annum which amounts to an increase of £308.

c/ CPI (Consumer Price Inflation)

In arriving at its recommendations, the Panel has taken into account the latest reported CPI figure as published by the Office for National Statistics. This was 2.60% in September 2024.

The uprating of the 2025/26 recommended basic award by the CPI figure would give a revised Basic Award of £5,661 which amounts to an increase of £143.

d/ Local Government Pay Award

The Panel was mindful of the current local government pay award offer of £1,290 for employees earning up to £51,515, or the full-time equivalent (FTE), which represented a pay increase of 5.49% for the lowest earning employees. Uprating of the 2025/26 recommended basic award by the same percentage would give a revised Basic Award of £5821, which amounts to an increase of £303.

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Appendix 2 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Tranche 1

Tranche 1 of the Medium Term Financial Plan was put out for consultation at the meeting of Cabinet on the 10th December 2024.

In the intermediate period however, there has been a consultation running on Tranche 1 of the budget. This supplemental paper updates Cabinet on the results of that consultation.

Tranche 1 Consultation

The Council has consulted on its Tranche 1 budget. This budget consultation opened on Thu 5 December 2024. An email invite was sent to the Bromsgrove Community Panel. The survey was also promoted on a variety of social media channels.

The survey closed at 12noon on Thursday 2 January 2025. The response rate for the community panel was 48%. There were a total of 278 valid responses received.

Question 2 gives a split of the consultation responses by location with the highest percentage of returns coming from Aston Fields, Belbroughton and Romsley, and Bromsgrove Centre.

Question 16 gives the splits of Age Ranges of the people who filled out the questionnaire. The vast majority were over 50.

The survey asked respondents to rank the three most important services they felt the Council should invest in. These were:

- Local Economic Development and Employment (47.1% of respondents).
- Community Safety (44.6.% of respondents).
- Maintenance of the Landscape and Environment (43.8.% of respondents)

Each question had the following Questions asked had the following possible responses.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

In those questions, 6 had responses well over 50% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and only two had responses lower than 50% - these being

- Do you agree that the Council should invest more in our front-line services to cover increases in fuel at a 49.6% approval rate.
- Do you support fees and charges (this excludes parking) rising by 4% to keep them in line with inflation and rising staffing costs at a 40.2% approval rate.

The highest approval rating, at 86.2% was the question - Do you agree that the Council should invest in economic development in order to support local businesses, start-ups, the town and local centres and to prioritise local skills.

Two further questions were asked on what level of increase to Bromsgrove District Council's proportion of Council Tax do you support?

- 61.5% agreed or strongly agreed with a 1.99% increase.
- This dropped to 45.8% at 2.99%.

There were 2 free text questions:

- Please let us know your suggestions for investing in the district to increase prosperity and enhance appeal for residents and businesses alike?
 - There were 178 responses to this question.
 - Responses to this question provided many suggestions and comments regarding the district. The top three themes were Bromsgrove Town Centre, supporting businesses and the importance of infrastructure, from roads to public transport. These themes had many cross overs, from the impact of traffic, encouraging a diverse range of businesses into the town and reducing costs to visitors and businesses alike.
 - Suggestions included:
 - Reducing business rates / relief
 - Reducing parking costs
 - Supporting independent retailers
 - Bringing in key major retailers
 - Understanding offer on High Street- too many charity shops, cafes, hair & vaping businesses
 - Utilise empty shops- for small businesses, new start-ups, housing, community use
 - Improve the market- quality, offer, number of days
 - Make the town vibrant, attractive & distinctive- develop attractions, encourage visitors
 - Improve the appearance & maintenance of the high street
 - Improved public transport
 - Support active travel
 - Access grants wherever possible
 - Ensure a district-wide view
 -
- Please let us know any other comments on the budget or ideas for reducing costs or increasing income to ensure Council services remain sustainable?
 - There were 118 responses to this question.
 - Of the responses to this question, the largest category fell into the theme of efficiency and value for money. Other themes included infrastructure, focusing on those in need, ensuring transparency and accountability asset utilisation, and the town centre.
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- Suggestions included:
 - Reviewing salaries
 - Ensuring right skills within the council
 - Outsource some functions
 - Explore alternative methods of delivery e.g. co-operatives, partnerships
 - Reduce use of consultants
 - Review fees & charges
 - Commercial opportunities e.g. logs, compost or specific services
 - Turn off lights / utilise smart sensors
 - Reduce events
 - Promote events better to increase revenue
 - Community use of buildings
 - Energy generation e.g. solar panels in car parks
 - Convert buildings into housing e.g. multi-storey by Asda
 - Increase enforcement fines e.g. fly tipping & littering
 - Support the voluntary sector
 - Reducing business rates / relief
 - Review council tax
 - Better coordination around highways and roadworks

The Spreadsheet sets out the overall summary and a breakdown by question.

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