

**Independent Remuneration Panel
for Worcestershire District Councils**

Annual Report and Recommendations for 2024-25

Bromsgrove District Council

December 2023

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Recommendations to the Council

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

- 1. A Basic Allowance for 2024-25 of £5,518, representing an 8.6% increase.**
- 2. A range of Special Responsibility Allowances as set out in Appendix 1**
- 3. That travel allowances for 2024-25 continue to be paid in accordance with the HMRC mileage allowance**
- 4. That subsistence allowances for 2024-25 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 2023 which set out a mean hourly wage rate for Worcestershire of £18.83.
- 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 2023/24 National Pay Award for the majority of Local Government employees
- Considered the Consumer Price Index information as of September 2023

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

In determining a recommendation for the basic award for 2024/25, consideration has once again been given to the average number of hours spent by councillors on Council business. For 2024/25 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 2022/23

As part of the research, consideration has been given to the Members' allowances budget for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances in the previous year (2022-23) 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, population¹ 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	148,323	68,459	46.16	2.16	Not available yet
Malvern Hills DC (31) 79,445	176,037	73,841.17	41.9	3.15	2.7
Redditch Borough (29) 85,568	134,668	97,540	72.43	2.71	Not available yet
Worcester City (35) 100,265	153,495	96,085	60.62	2.54	1.25
Wychavon (43) 131,084	212,387	95,818	45.11	2.35	1.70

4. Average Payment per Councillor across Worcestershire 2022/23

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 (2022/23):

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

Authority (number of Councillors)	Amount £
Bromsgrove District (31)	6,992.97
Malvern Hills District (31)	6,575.74
Redditch Borough (29)	8007.17
Worcester City (35)	7,237.71
Wychavon District (43)	6,948.03

5. Consideration of allowances for the financial year 2024/25

a/ Basic Allowance

The Basic Allowance is paid to all Members of the Council in order 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 2021-22 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 is able to 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 2023-24 and the latest CPI (consumer price inflation) figure as of September 2023.

Based on all of the above considerations, the Panel recommend a Basic Award of £5,518 for the financial year 2024/25. 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 an 8.6% 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 at 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.

The Panel have not received any recommended changes in Special Responsibility Allowances for 2024/25. As such the recommended values have not changed for 2024/25.

The full list of recommended SRA multipliers and values is set out at 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 Parish in Bromsgrove District.

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:

Caroline Murphy (Co-Chair) – 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 developing and delivering a large part of the 14-19 Pathfinder, during which time her department was recognised as achieving Beacon Council Status. She has a wealth of experience at building partnerships. Caroline now works as freelance Education, Skills and Development Adviser supporting individuals and organisations with strategic management, quality assurance and improvement, safeguarding, regulation compliance, research and evaluation, data protection and developing policies and procedures. She has worked in a consultancy capacity for a number of organisations, specialising in those who support vulnerable young people. She also spent 14 years as the Vice Chair of Governors of a primary school in Birmingham.

Tim Hunt (Co-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 and is a Member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

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.

Susan Moxon - 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.

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 Oyenuga from Bromsgrove & Redditch Councils
- Mel Harris from Wychavon District Council
- Matthew Davies 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. A special thanks is extended to Lisa Perks from Malvern Hills District Council who has so ably supported independent panel members during her appointment as Democratic Services Officer, and best wishes are extended to her in her subsequent role as Electoral Services Officer. The Panel also wishes to place on record its thanks to Matthew Davies for his time and invaluable work as a Member the Panel prior to his new role at Malvern Hills District Council.

Caroline Murphy and Tim Hunt, Co-Chairs 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 2023/24 (IRP)	Current Multiplier (Council Agreed)	Rec'd Allowance 2023/24 (IRP) £	Current Allowance 2023/24 (Council Agreed) £	Rec'd Multiplier 2024/25 (IRP)	Rec'd Allowance 2024/25 (IRP) £
Basic Allowance:	1	1	5,081	4,732	1	5,518
Special Responsibility Allowances:						
Leader	3	3	15,243	14,196	3	16,554
Deputy Leader	1.75	2	8,891.75	9,464	1.75	9,656.50
Executive Members (Cabinet Portfolio Holders)	1.5	1.3	7,621.50	6,151	1.5	8,277
Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Board	1.5	1.3	7,621.50	6,151	1.5	8,277
Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Task Groups	0.25	0.25	1,270.25	1,183 (paid pro rata for the length of the task group)	0.25	1,379.50
Chairman of Audit, Standards and Governance Committee	0.25	0.3	1,270.25	1,419	0.25	1,379.50
Chairman of Planning Committee	1	1.3	5,081	6,151	1	5,518
Chairman of Licensing Committee	0.3	0.3	1524.30	1,419	0.3	1,655.40
Political Group Leaders	0.25	0.25	1,270.25	1,183 Leaders of other political groups with 3 or more members (not applicable to the Leader of the Council)	0.25	1,379.50
Chairman of Appointments Committee (BDC only)	0.03	0.03	152.43 per meeting	141 per meeting	0.03	165.54 per meeting
Chairman of Electoral Matters Committee	0.03	0.03	152.43 per meeting	141 per meeting	0.03	165.54 per meeting

(BDC only)						
Chairman of Appeals Panel (BDC only)	0.03	0.03	152.43 per meeting	141 per meeting	0.03	165.54 per meeting

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 District Council’s “nearest neighbours” are:

- Stroud
- Lichfield
- Maldon
- South Staffordshire
- Harborough
- Tewkesbury

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 £5,976 as at December 2023.

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 \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

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 (£18.83 as at December 2023).

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 £5,518 per annum which amounts to an increase of £437.

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 6.3% in September 2023. The uprating of the 2024/25 recommended basic award by the CPI figure would give a revised Basic Award of £5,401.10, which amounts to an increase of £320.10.

d/ Local Government Pay Award

The Panel was mindful of the current local government pay award offer of £1,925 for employees earning up to £49,950 (pro rata for part-time and term time only employees), with 3.88% on the table for higher-paid workers for 2023/24. Uprating of the 2024/25 recommended basic award by the same percentage would give a revised Basic Award of £5,419.80, which amounts to an increase of £338.80.