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A GUIDE TO THE MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME AND OTHER ASSISTANCE

This document has been produced to provide Councillors with a clear guide to the Members' Allowances Scheme and other provisions and facilities to ensure that there is clarity and avoidance of doubt and to prevent inconsistency in application.

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1. THE MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

The Members' Allowances Scheme is drawn up in accordance with the Local Authority's (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. A Scheme must be agreed before the beginning of each financial year. For a scheme to be changed it must be subject to review and recommendation from a Panel made up of non-elected independent persons.

The current Members' Allowances Scheme was agreed on 24 February 2010 and is in accord with a review undertaken by an independent remuneration panel that reported in October 2007.

All sums quoted are gross and are subject to tax and National Insurance, as appropriate.

a. **Basic Allowance - £7,124**

The basic allowance is payable to all Councillors. Councillors receive this allowance, pro-rata each month, and it is paid into a nominated account via the BACS system.

b. **Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)**

These payments are made to individual Councillors in recognition of the responsibilities of a particular post to which they have been appointed. There are 5 levels of SRA, detailed below. This allowance is paid in addition to the Basic Allowance and is paid pro-rata, each month, in the same way as the Basic Allowance.

No Councillor may claim more than one SRA.

Scale I	Leader of the Council	£17,810
Scale II	Executive Members + Chair of Scrutiny Overview Committee + Chair of Licensing + Chair of Planning and Development	£9,795
Scale III	Chairs of Scrutiny Topic Groups + Chair of Audit Committee	£8,013
Scale IV	Chairs of Area Committees	£6,233
Scale V	SBC "Lead" Member (Chair/Vice-Chair) Highways Joint Member Panel	£4,451

c. **Carer's Allowance***

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This allowance may be claimed against the cost of child or dependent adult care that a Member may incur whilst they on official duties e.g. attending a Council or Committee meeting, or an outside body upon which they have been appointed by Council.

The following rates may be claimed –

Childcare	Maximum of £6 per hour
Dependant care	Maximum of £10 per hour

A maximum of 20 hours per month may be claimed. Claims must be supported by a valid receipt. Payments to relatives of other members of the household will be excluded. Claims for Carers Allowance must be submitted within two months of the date to which they relate using the appropriate claim form.

d. Travel Claims*

An allowance may be claimed for travel on Council business and is paid on the same basis as for Council employees. Claims for travel allowance must be submitted within two months of the date to which they relate using the appropriate claim form.

i. Travel by Public Transport

Travel will be by second class transport. However, the Leader, Chief Executive or other Strategic Director may authorise first class travel where appropriate. For example, where second class is fully booked or where Members and officers are travelling together using the journey to discuss sensitive matters. Travel by first class should be authorised in advance.

Taxis should only be used where no other practical, more economic form of transport is available. If a taxi journey is necessary a receipt should be obtained and submitted with the claim. Reimbursement to taxi fares will be subject to authorisation of a Strategic Director or relevant Head of Service. Hire cars (with or without driver) are only provided where a member is representing the Council and no other suitable transport is available or appropriate. In such circumstances authorisation is to be obtained from a Strategic Director or relevant Head of Service.

For train journeys, as far as practicable, Members should apply to Members' Services at least 2 days in advance and a travel warrant will be provided. In these circumstances there is no outlay for the Member concerned. If a Member purchases her/his own ticket, the ticket or a receipt should be submitted with the claim for reimbursement.

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ii. Travel by Car

The current mileage rate is as follows –

Up to 999cc -	42.9p per mile
1000cc + -	47.7p per mile

See also 'Hotel Accommodation / Overnight Expenses' below

e. Subsistence*

Allowances for subsistence are the same as those for Council employees. Reimbursement for breakfast, lunch and/or dinner may be claimed when a Member is on Council business and is prevented from taking a meal at their normal dining place. Receipts must be submitted with the claim. Claims for subsistence must be submitted within two months of the date to which they relate using the appropriate claim form.

The following subsistence rates are payable.

	Maximum
Breakfast	£6.16
Lunch	£8.38
Dinner	£11.21

Reimbursement of claims for amounts greater than those detailed above must be authorised for payment by a Strategic Director or relevant Head of Service. The cost of alcoholic drinks will not be reimbursed.

See also 'Refreshments at Meetings' and 'Hotel Accommodation' below sections below.

f. Pensions

Pensions for eligible members were introduced in May 2003 under the Local Government Act 2000. If you wish to join the Pension Scheme, contact the Constitutional Services Manager who will arrange for you to receive up to date information and the relevant documentation for completion.

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g. Renunciation

A Councillor may, by notice in writing to the Chief Executive, elect to forego any part of their entitlement to an allowance under this scheme.

* A list of 'Council Business' for which claims may be made under the Scheme is attached as an appendix to this Guide.

2. TELEPHONES

The Council does not provide Members with landlines, handsets, fax machines, mobile telephones or blackberries. Telephone costs are provided for in the level of Members' Allowances. Members' may use telephones and fax machines in Daneshill House for official Council business. Authorisation from a Strategic Director or relevant Head of Service will be required for international calls or faxes.

3. PCS, LAPTOPS ETC.

The cost of purchasing computer hardware, software, consumables, broadband connection and all other telecommunications related costs is covered by the Basic Allowance paid to all Members.

The Council's Customer Services and Business Improvement Unit provides Members with support in identifying appropriate network solutions, hardware and software; installation of hardware and software; fault diagnosis and resolution; and training. Kit may also be purchased through the Customer Services & Business Improvement Unit with the recipient then being invoiced for the cost (inc. VAT) or the sum deducted directly from her/his Allowance.

Councillors may use PCs in the Civic Suite for official Council business.

4. CAR PARK SEASON TICKETS*

Car park season tickets, for use when visiting the Town Centre on official Council business, are issued to Members on request. On receipt of a season ticket Members are asked sign a form acknowledging the limitations on use. Personal use of season tickets is not permitted and may jeopardise the tax free status of this facility.

* A list of 'Council Business' for which the season ticket may be used is attached as an appendix to this Guide.

5. HOTEL ACCOMMODATION / OVERNIGHT EXPENSES

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Provision for hotel accommodation/overnight expenses when on official Council business is in line with that allowed for Council employees.

When required to stay overnight somewhere on Council business, accommodation should be booked in advance through the Members' Services Office. Accommodation provided will be no more than four star rated.

Where meals are provided in the cost of the accommodation, claims will not be entertained for alternative meals, e.g. if breakfast is provided in the accommodation cost, an additional claim for breakfast would not be paid. Otherwise the subsistence allowance, as detailed in the Members' Allowances Scheme, see section 1 above, may be claimed.

The costs of any personal items or services purchased e.g. newspapers, snacks from the mini-bar, will not be reimbursed, nor will the purchase of alcoholic drinks.

Travel costs to and from the venue are covered by the Members' Allowances Scheme, see section 1 above. Reimbursement will not be paid for any travel costs incurred whilst staying away from home unless the trip is made as part of official business undertaken.

6. REFRESHMENTS AT MEETINGS

Refreshments for Members can be provided in the Ingelheim Lounge before formal meetings and Modern Member Activities that start between 17.00 – 18.30 hours. Individual Members are required to inform Constitutional Services (Members' Services) if they require refreshments for each meeting they are scheduled to attend. Refreshments will only be provided for those individuals who have requested them.

Food and refreshments are not provided at any meeting which is political in nature e.g. Party meetings, Group meetings or inner caucus meetings in Members' offices.

Where a Member partakes of refreshment provided, a subsistence allowance under the Members' Allowances Scheme will not be paid.

7. CONFERENCES AND COURSES

Requests for Members to attend any outside conference or course is forwarded to the Leader for approval. Members are required to complete a request form, available on the internet or from Members' Services, provide details of the course or conference (organiser, subject matter, venue, and cost) and their personal objectives in attending the event. If approved, the Member is notified and

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attendance is to be booked and arranged by the Members' Services Section so that any related expenditure may be accounted for centrally.

The relevant sections concerning travel, subsistence and hotel accommodation / overnight expenses, set out elsewhere in this guide, will apply as appropriate.

8. HOSPITALITY

The Members' Code of Conduct requires Councillors to declare any gifts or hospitality with an estimated value of £25 or more. Such declarations should be made in writing to the Council's Monitoring Officer (Paul Froggatt).

9. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

Within 28 days of being elected individual Councillors are required to complete details of personal interests, as set out in the Code of Conduct*, in the Council's register of members' interests (maintained under section 81(1) of the Local Government Act 2000). In the event of you becoming aware of any new personal interest or change in any personal interest you have registered, new/revised details must be provided to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.

The Council's Monitoring Officer is the Borough Solicitor, Paul Froggatt and he may be contacted by telephone (242212) or e.mail paul.froggatt@stevenage.gov.uk .

* All Councillors have been provided with a copy of the Code of Conduct. This may also be found in the Council's Constitution.

10. MEMBERS' POST

The Members post is sorted into individual pigeon holes in room 103 in the Civic Suite. This room is secure and access is via your ID/Security badge. On visiting Daneshill House Members are requested to pick up their post from that room. Whilst officers will arrange to post out agendas and other post that appears urgent at least once a week, if you have received any bulky publications, or there is a build up of general post in your pigeon hole you will be contacted to arrange collection.

11. MEMBERS' LIBRARY

The Members' Library is situated in the Civic Suite and is for use by Councillors only. There is a PC, telephone and tea and coffee facilities for your use.

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There is a small reference library and copies of recent agendas and other publications are available. Due to budget pressures, other than the Municipal Journal and Local Government Chronicle, no other periodicals or newspapers are purchased, however, there is an index list of website addresses where many newspapers and magazines can be accessed.

As this room is a facility for all Members it should not normally be used for meetings.

12. MEMBERS' MEETING ROOM

Next to the Library there is a small meeting room for Member use. If you wish to book the room for a meeting please contact the Members' Services Office.

Occasionally, if the room is not being used by Councillors, and no other rooms are available, this facility may be used by officers.

13. THE IN / OUT BOARD

In the Members' Services Office (Room 158) there is an In/Out Board with the name of each Councillor listed. If you are in Daneshill House for longer than a few minutes you are asked to visit the office and indicate on the Board that you are 'in' and your whereabouts around Daneshill (please change the Board to 'out' before you leave). Members may also jot down messages on the board and details of holiday dates etc. will be displayed

14. MEMBERS' EXPENSES – RECORD KEEPING

Constitutional Services maintain an electronic record of both expenses claimed personally by individual Members and expenditure incurred on their behalf e.g. travel warrants or accommodation. At any time individual members may request a copy of their own record of expenditure

15. MAYORAL ACTIVITIES

a. Mayor's Budget

The allowance paid to the Mayor is currently not included within the formal published Member's Allowances Scheme. The 2010/2011 budget includes provision for the Mayor's Allowance and Hospitality Budget.

The Mayor's Allowance is £6,500 per annum, paid monthly on a pro-rata basis and is subject to tax and National Insurance, where

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appropriate. This allowance covers all incidental expenses incurred on Mayoral engagements, such as raffle tickets and collections.

It is accepted that a Mayor and Consort may, from time to time, need to purchase appropriate clothing to undertake their mayoral duties. The Mayor may claim up to £1,500 over their term of office.

Reimbursement for individual expenditure will be paid on production of a relevant receipt(s). No more than £250 will be reimbursed for any one garment or suit.

The Members' Services Office (Mayor's Secretary) holds a budget of up to £10,000 per Mayoral term of office for use for hospitality and arranging events. The Mayor will be provided with details of expenditure and commitment against this budget on a monthly basis.

b. Deputy Mayor's Budget

A sum of £5,000 is included in the 2010/2011 budget to pay an allowance to the Deputy Mayor to cover all her/his expenses in undertaking the work of that Office. This allowance is paid pro-rata each month and is subject to tax and National Insurance, as appropriate. In the event that the individual in post is also in a position that attracts a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) under the Members' Allowances Scheme, only one Allowance i.e. the Deputy Mayor's Allowance or the SRA will be paid.

c. The Mayoral Car

The chauffeur driven mayoral car is for use on mayoral engagements only. If the car is not being used by the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and/or the Mayor Designate may use the car for attendance at an engagement. It should be noted however that the Chauffeur's hours are limited and therefore for informal meetings in Daneshill House the Mayoral car is not provided.

Where there are multiple civic engagements on any one day and it is not possible for the Mayoral car to be used for all events, priority for use is the Mayor attending events in Stevenage. Where the Mayoral car can not be provided dignitaries are generally required to self drive (mileage claims may be submitted - see relevant section on the Members Allowances Scheme). However, in exceptional circumstances a taxi may be provided.

Useful Telephone Nos.

Jackie Cansick – Constitutional Services Manager – 242216
Maureen Nicholson – Members' Services and Events Officer – 242278
Tracey Frost – Mayor's Secretary - 242227
Paul Froggatt – Monitoring Officer - 242212
IT Action Desk – 242433

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