

Meeting: Full Council

Date: 25 February 2004

MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME

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1 PURPOSE

To make a Members allowances scheme to run from 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 To make a Members' allowances scheme in the form set out in the appendix to this report.

3 DETAILS

3.1 Local authorities are now required to make a members' allowance scheme before the beginning of each financial year whether or not the existing scheme is to be altered.

3.2 In November 2003 an independent panel made recommendations to the Full Council on a revised Members' allowances scheme. On 26 November, the Full Council adopted the recommendations of the independent panel without amendment. This scheme is set out in the appendix to this report.

3.3 Before local authorities can amend schemes they must commission a report from an independent panel and consider their recommendations. Panels are able to recommend adjustments to allowances by reference to an index, but did not do so in their last report. The current scheme must, therefore, be adopted without amendment for 2004-5. It would, however, be possible to amend the scheme in the light of a new report from an independent panel and it is intended to ask the panel to undertake such a review prior to or during the new Municipal Year.

3 IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Financial Implications

This cost estimate is based on the recommendation in this report and may well change if the Committee structure and Scheme are amended in the new municipal year.

There are three separate elements to the costs.

Basic Allowances and Special Responsibility Allowances

Estimate for 2004/05 £436,920.

Payments to Co-opted Members

Estimate £2,250.

Pensions for Members

It is not possible to be specific about the cost of allowing Members to access the Pension scheme, as this will depend, among other things, on the number of members who choose to join. The legislation indicates that the rate to be paid should be the same as for staff, which is 20.70% for 2004/05.

The estimates are as follows:

25% take-up - £22,610

50% take-up - £45,220

75% take-up - £67,830

90% take-up - £81,400.

4 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 4.1 The Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel – November 2003
- 4.2 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

EFFECTIVE FROM 1 April 2004 to 31 March

Stevenage Borough Council has made the following Members' Allowances scheme under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Member's Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

1. This scheme may be cited as the Stevenage Borough Council Members' Allowances Scheme, and shall have effect for the current year commencing on 1st May and on the 1st April in subsequent years.
2. In this scheme,

"Councillor" means a Member of the Stevenage Borough Council who is a Councillor;

"year" means the period ending on 31st March 2004.
3. Basic Allowance

A basic allowance shall be paid to each Councillor from 1st April.
4. Special Responsibility Allowances
 - 1) For each year a special responsibility allowance shall be paid to those Councillors who hold the special responsibilities in relation to the authority that are specified in the schedule to this scheme.
 - 2) Subject to paragraph 6, (part year entitlements) the amount of each such allowance shall be the amount specified against that special responsibility in that schedule.
 - 3) Members are only able to claim one SRA.
5. 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.
6. Part-year Entitlements

Payment of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances will be pro-rata where Councillors do not serve for a full year on the Council.
7. Payments

Payments shall be made on a regular monthly basis. Claims for dependent carer's allowances and travel and subsistence allowance shall be made within two months of being incurred.

8. Suspension of Payments

The Council will withhold all allowances to any Councillor who is suspended for misconduct and will require Councillors to repay any allowance already paid during a period of suspension.

Basic Allowances and Special Responsibility Allowances

Basic Allowance	Paid to All Members	£5,760
(i)	Scale I Leader of the Council	£15,050
(ii)	Scale II Cabinet – Executive Committee Members + Chair of Scrutiny Overview Committee	£9,135
(iii)	Scale III Chairs of Scrutiny/Review Panels + Chair of Planning and Development	£7,255
(iv)	Scale IV Chairs of Joint Local Committees	£4,300

Payment to Specific Co-opted Members

Independent Standards Committee Chairman Honorarium (1-off payment)	£1,250
Independent Standards Committee other Member Honorarium (1-off payment)	£1,000

Carer's Allowance

The following amounts may be claimed for Councillors attending approved duties.

Childcare	Maximum of £5.00 per hour
Dependant care	Maximum of £8.50 per hour

Payment to relatives will not be admissible and there will be a maximum allowance of 20 hours per month. Receipts will need to be provided.

Travel, Subsistence and Other Allowances

The allowances for travel and subsistence will be the same as those fixed for employees of the Council from time to time. These allowances are currently under review and will be amended over the next few months.