

Member Remuneration Panel (MRP) – Review and Recommendations for 2026/27 to 2029/30 Scheme

Introduction

This review presents independent recommendations for Members Allowances based on the full review of the Members Allowances Scheme. This review is being performed approximately 12 months after the interim review which was presented to the previous Members before the elections. For completeness, the recommendations that the panel deems relevant to be carried over from the interim review have been included in this report.

Approach

For the purpose of this review, the Panel conducted semi-structured interviews with senior Kent County Council staff (including the Head of Law/Monitoring Officer), and 5 Members of the Council. The Panel also conducted an electronic survey, circulated to all Members, which attracted 30 responses. The review also draws upon desk-based research, including benchmarking against Members Allowances Schemes in other jurisdictions.

Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)

All elected KCC Members are entitled to receive a Basic Allowance (£16,266.91 for 2025/26) to perform their duties required under the Constitution. This flat rate allowance is intended to cover meeting attendance, dealing with constituent queries and correspondence, basic office consumables, and general home office costs. It is not a salary.

Some elected Members receive an additional Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for any special responsibility that they might have as a Member of the Council (such as Cabinet Member). These amounts vary and are normally expressed as a percentage of the SRA of the Council Leader, which is currently £53,493.38 as per the table below.

Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance Permissible Under the Current Scheme

Allowance	Amount (£)	% Leader's SRA	Number eligible	Total cost
Basic	£16,266.91	NA	81	£1,317,619.71
SRAs				
Leader	£53,493.38	100	1	£53,493.38
Cabinet Members	£34,770.70	65	9	£312,936.30
Deputy Cabinet Members	£16,048.01	30	11	£176,528.11
Cabinet Committee Chair	£9,361.34	17.5	6	£56,168.04
Council Chairman	£17,652.82	33	1	£17,652.82
Council Vice-Chairman	£9,361.34	17.5	1	£9,361.34
Planning Applications Committee Chair	£11,768.54	22	1	£11,768.54
Regulation Committee Chair (Note 1)	£11,768.54	22	1	£11,768.54
Oher Committee Chairs	£9,361.34	17.5	4	£37,445.36
Scrutiny Committee Chair	£9,361.34	17.5	1	£9,361.34
Leader of Opposition Group (Note 2)	£17,652.82	33	3	£52,958.46
			SRA Total	£749,442.23
			Total	£2,067,061.94

Notes to above table:

Note 1 – The council has made the decision to transfer the responsibilities of this committee to the Planning Application Committee but as the transfer has not been fully implemented at the time of this report, and the SRA remains on the scheme as one that could be paid if the Regulation Committee was re-established, it remains on the table.

Note 2 – For this SRA, the number eligible refers to the total amount payable. If there were more than 4 eligible Leaders of Opposition Groups, the total sum for 3 SRAs would be divided amongst them, under the current scheme.

Approach

For the purpose of this review, the Panel invited all Members to participate in a survey that considered the adequacy of the current approach to Member allowances, including the basic allowance, among other questions. We received 30 responses from Members on the topic of basic allowances.

The Panel also conducted a benchmarking exercise against a Peer Group of County Councils. The Peer Group included those County Councils with a population in excess of

one million, i.e. the largest County Councils by population. The Panel also took into account the annual budget for Kent County Council, in comparison with the Peer Group.

Findings

19 Members (63% of respondents) felt that the basic allowance currently available was not adequate remuneration for a KCC councillor.

Concerns were raised around the hours required to perform the role effectively, the perceived inequalities across differing wards, the issue with daytime meetings impacting ability to work alongside the role, and therefore the potential barriers to entry of the basic allowance.

The Peer Group selected for benchmarking purposes and their basic allowances comprised:

- Essex County Council - £14,471
- Hampshire County Council - £14,399
- Hertfordshire - £12,437
- Lancashire - £14,301
- Surrey – £14,410

The benchmarking exercise indicates that Kent County Council's basic allowance at £16,226.91 is currently the highest amongst these peers.

Recommendations:

Basic allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of all councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers and constituents and attendance at political group meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of their homes. Given the complexity of the mandate of KCC we believe that the basic allowance is a fair reflection of the time commitment that is required for Kent County Council even though it is the highest amongst the peer group.

As the incidental use of the home is a key component that the basic allowance seeks to recognise we believe that the CPIH is the best measure of inflation to be adopted by Kent County Council for this review period applying it on the current KCC allowance.

The CPIH 12-month rate is 3.6% for the 12 month period to December 2025.

The Panel notes concerns made by Members in response to the survey about the basic allowance being below minimum wage - if it were an employed role - however, the role is not employed and, as such, is not protected by such legislation.

In line with the uprating recommendations made in the 2025 Interim Review (included on page 11 in this report), the Panel recommends an uplift of 3.6% in line with the latest CPIH measure. This is to be applied to the Basic Allowance.

Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

Approach

For the purpose of this review, the panel invited all Members to participate in a survey that considered the adequacy of the current allowance approach to Member allowances, including the special responsibility allowances, among other questions. We received 30 responses from Members on the topic of special responsibility allowances.

The Panel also conducted a benchmarking exercise against a Peer Group of County Councils. The Peer Group included those County Councils with a population in excess of one million, i.e. the largest County Councils by population. The Panel also took into account the annual budget for Kent County Council, in comparison with the Peer Group.

Findings

10 Members (33% of respondents) felt that the current special responsibility allowance currently available does not appropriately compensate for the additional responsibilities undertaken.

Concerns were raised around the hours required to perform the role effectively, the perceived inequalities across differing SRA roles (e.g., Chairs and Vice Chairs), professional skill requirements, and a cap on the number of SRAs available for any one Member.

- Essex County Council - Paid as % of Leaders allowance, from 10% to 80%
- Hampshire County Council – fixed, numerous and various
- Hertfordshire – From 0.25 x Basic Allowance (BA), to Leader 4 x BA
- Lancashire - Paid as % of Leaders allowance, from 10% to 70%
- Surrey – Fixed, available only for certain roles; limited

Recommendations

In line with the uprating recommendations made in the 2025 Interim Review, the Panel recommends an uplift of 3.6% in line with the latest CPIH measure. This is to be applied to the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Leader, with other SRAs increasing as a relevant proportion of this. The Panel believes that the reference SRA for the Leader is appropriate on a standalone basis and as a reference point for other SRAs.

It is noted that the roles of the Regulation and Electoral/Boundary Review committees are being subsumed into the Planning and Selection and Member Services committees. At this stage, there is no recommendation made to change the relevant SRA for this role, but this may be reviewed in the future.

Co-opted Member/ Independent Person Allowances

This review has considered the Allowance paid to the co-opted Members and Independent Persons within its scope, to provide Kent County Council with recommendations on the allowance.

The Co-opted Member Allowance for the Governance and Audit Committee was increased from £1,500 to £1,700 following the Panel's recommendation in the 2025/26 interim review, as accepted by County Council on 10 July 2025.

The provision for the Independent Person (Standards) in the Members' Allowances Scheme was an allowance of £500 per annum. In addition to the annual payment, the Independent Person is entitled to a daily rate of £100 for each day (or pro-rata for part days) worked. They are also eligible to claim expenses and dependent carer's allowances where applicable.

Approach

For the purpose of this review, the Panel conducted a benchmarking exercise against a Peer Group of County Councils. The Peer Group included those County Councils with a population in excess of one million, i.e. the largest County Councils by population. The Panel also took into account the annual budget for Kent County Council, in comparison with the Peer Group.

Findings

The Peer Group selected for benchmarking purposes comprised:

- Essex County Council - £750 p.a. plus expenses
- Hampshire County Council - £813 p.a. (not including Audit Committee Member, £2000 p.a.) plus expenses and dependent carer's allowance
- Hertfordshire - £500-1000 p.a. plus expenses
- Lancashire - £1,500 plus expenses for Audit Committee, other roles expenses only
- Surrey - expenses only

The benchmarking exercise indicates that Kent County Council's lumpsum Co-opted Member Allowance approach for the Governance and Audit Committee co-opted Members is broadly consistent with the approach taken by Peers.

The approach to other Co-opted roles and Independent Persons is less consistent across the benchmarking group. The benefit of the lumpsum approach is that it supports budget planning and transparency, with the risk being that Co-opted Member time spent to deliver against the workload is not accurately reflected. The benefit of the less common daily/hourly rate approach is that the time spent on Council work by Co-opted Members is more accurately recognised, with the risk being that this is harder to budget for and it may create an incentive for excessive time spent on Council business. On balance, the more widely adopted lumpsum approach presents the lower risk to Kent County Council, provided that expectations for the demands of the role are managed with prospective Co-opted Members upfront. It is also noted that the allowance is intended as an honorarium rather than as compensation for time spent.

The benchmarking exercise also highlighted that the approach to Co-opted Member expenses varies, with some only some Co-opted Members eligible for expense reimbursement. It was noted that a minority of County Council Members Allowances Schemes state that Co-opted Members are eligible for the Carer's Allowance.

Of the Peer Group County Councils allocating a lumpsum Co-opted Member Allowance, the range was from £500 to £2000. Kent County Council's current Audit Committee allowance of £1,700 (as increased in the 2025/26 scheme) falls within this range.

The current Independent Person (Standards) lumpsum allowance falls within the Peer Group range for these roles.

Recommendations

The current Co-opted Member Allowance of £1,700 for the Audit Committee is now more appropriately aligned with the public service performed by Co-opted Members in a large County Council with budget oversight in excess of £2.6 billion. The role played by Co-opted Members carries significant responsibilities, and the Audit skillset is in high demand from the private sector, where typical compensation is significantly higher than the allowance, even with a public service discount applied. The Panel notes that the increase from £1,500 to £1,700 agreed in 2025/26 has been welcomed and considers this level appropriate for the current period. Given the recent review and adjustment of the Governance & Audit Committee allowance, we recommend the standard uprating mechanism is applied on an annual basis, with no further adjustments required.

For other Independent Persons and Co-opted Members, the Panel recommends moving away from a per diem-based mechanism towards a lumpsum approach, consistent with the approach taken by the Peer Group. This lumpsum payment should be eligible for the annual uprating in line with other Members allowances. This will support budgetary planning and provide transparency for people considering taking on these roles. Given

the proposed removal of the additional per diem, we recommend the lumpsum amount should be adjusted to £700, which falls within the Peer Group range.

We recommend that all Co-opted Members and Independent Persons should be eligible to claim travel expenses in the same way as elected Members and should be entitled to the Carer's Allowance. This is to support all interested people to perform these public service roles, so that travel and care costs are not a barrier to suitably qualified candidates.

Travel and Subsistence (and related expenses)

The current approach to expenses policy is based on receipts for eligible reimbursable travel and accommodation expenditure and HMRC mileage rates. Certain expenses can be eligible on a discretionary basis, for example taxi fares may be eligible with a receipt where necessary.

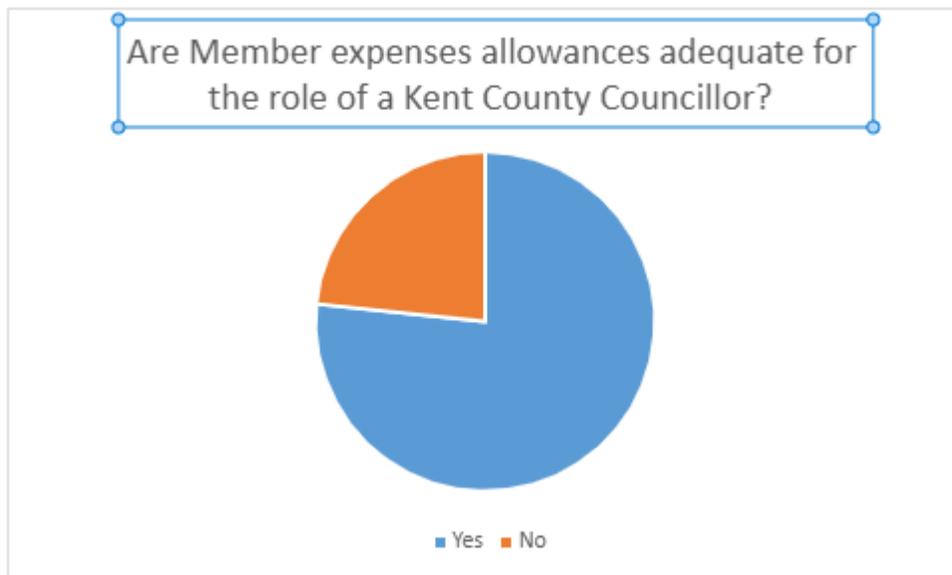
Approach

Members were invited to participate in a survey that considered the adequacy of the current expense approach, among other questions. We received 30 responses from Members on the topic of expenses.

The Panel also undertook benchmarking against other County Council expense approaches.

Findings

Of the 30 Member survey responses received, 23 respondents considered the current expense approach adequate, 7 did not:



The majority (77%) of Members that responded to the survey indicated that the current approach to Member expenses is adequate.

Where the approach was considered inadequate, additional information provided through the survey indicates some Members may not fully understand expense eligibility and further information or awareness may be needed, for example some expenses cited by Members as ineligible may already be eligible under the current scheme. One respondent cited the mileage rate as insufficient.

Where concerns were raised, for example regarding mileage, this Panel has considered benchmarking data to compare the approach with Member allowances schemes in other local authorities. Our benchmarking shows that aligning mileage allowances with the HMRC rates is a commonly adopted approach across other County Councils, and is consistent with peers including Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Lancashire, Surrey, Norfolk, East Sussex and Devon.

Recommendations

Based on Member consultation via the survey and our benchmarking exercise, this Panel recommends the current approach to Member expenses continues without changes.

Dependent Carer's Allowance

The current scheme has provision for a Dependent Carer's Allowance. This Panel does not have data on the current uptake of this allowance, not the proportion of Members eligible for this allowance choosing to claim this allowance. This allowance is typically important in supporting people with caring responsibilities to access these public service positions, and importantly in ensuring the diversity of the Member population reflects constituents.

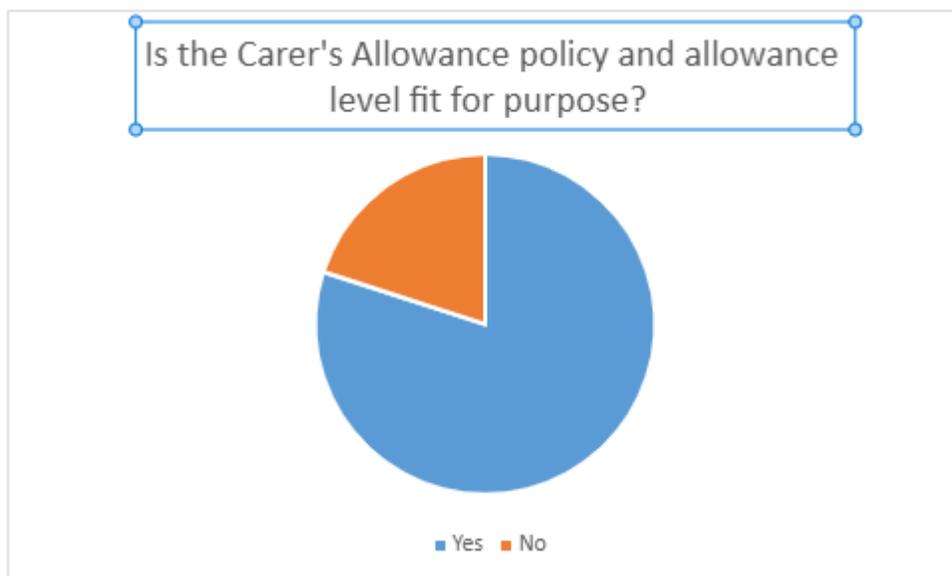
Approach

Members were surveyed on the Dependent Carer's allowance approach and 30 responses were received. Areas for further consideration emerging from the survey were benchmarked against other local authorities.

Findings

The current approach follows an accepted process of reimbursing actual care costs, subject to an hourly cap. This is applicable to childcare and adult dependent care and requires receipts/documentation. Carers from the Member's household are excluded.

Members were asked about whether the current allowance is fit for purpose. We received 30 responses, with 80% of respondents agreeing the current allowance is fit for purpose.



Based on additional information provided by respondents, where the answer was 'no' this was typically because there was a lack of information and awareness about the Carer's Allowance. Only one respondent indicated that the level of this allowance was inadequate when providing additional information about their response.

We note that only 4 survey respondents indicated that they claim or have claimed the Carer's allowance (13%). One respondent indicated they have caring responsibilities but did not claim the allowance, indicating that this was by choice rather than a barrier to uptake.

Our benchmarking indicates that the level of the allowance is broadly in line with comparator County Councils. That said, some schemes link the amount to the Real Living Wage. The benefit of this approach is that the amount is reviewed and updated in line with living wages annually, using an independently calculated and nationally accepted mechanism (Real Living Wage).

Recommendations

The Panel recommends that the level of allowance cap should be reviewed annually and increased in line with the Real Living Wage, as set by the Living Wage Foundation. This is in line with several comparator county councils and will ensure that the level of the cap is appropriate and does not become a barrier to Members. The current level of £13.98 is above the Real Living Wage of £13.45 and therefore no increase is required in this review period.

Some Members have indicated that they lack information about this allowance and the process for claiming this allowance. As such the Panel notes that further communication and education/awareness activities may be needed to build awareness of this allowance

and the process for claiming it. It may be helpful to remove barriers to serving as Members by promoting uptake by eligible Carers, as one survey response implied there is a misconception that there may be negative connotations to claiming this allowance.

Following the Interim review, the Member Remuneration Panel had indicated that the items listed below would be considered as part of this full review. However, based on our updated understanding of the matters and our responsibilities as a MRP vis a vis those of the KCC's administrative responsibilities, we are now of the view that these matters are best dealt with by KCC:

1. Review of job profile/descriptions for Members - Assessing KCC's profiles and descriptors for internal consistency and for comparison against other similar local authorities.
2. Communication of Members Allowances:
 - a. The training and awareness including Member Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements
 - b. Awareness interventions on expense regime and available allowances.

Up-rating

This interim review considered the indexation methodology which is used by the Kent County Council to adjust/urate/index annually all the categories of the Member allowances. The annual adjustment enables KCC to adjust the allowances pending a full review of the allowances which is normally performed every four years by the Members Review Panel.

Benchmarking

The Panel conducted a desk-based benchmarking exercise against a Sample Group of six County Councils nationwide. The Sample Group included County Councils from across the entire country to get as diverse and as representative a group as possible. The Sample Group selected for benchmarking purposes comprised:

- Surrey
- Essex
- Lancashire
- Derbyshire
- Devon
- West Sussex

Approach

In addition to the benchmarking exercise, feedback from semi-structured interviews with senior Kent County Council staff (including the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Corporate Director Finance), the Leader of the Council, and 9 Members of the Council, along with the electronic survey feedback was considered.

Findings

A review of the Indexation Methodology for the Sample Group revealed that of the six County Councils:

- All six use an uprating methodology that is based on inflation or other wage bargaining body
- One has an inflation only indexation methodology which is based on Consumer Price Index (CPI)
- Three have an indexation methodology based on the National Joint Council for Local Government (NJC) pay increase award
- One has a hybrid methodology based on CPI for basis and special responsibility allowances, HMRC rates for car allowances and NJC for carers allowances
- One utilises the Public Sector Pay Index (excluding bonuses) published by the Office of National Statistics for all allowances.

The benchmarking exercise indicates that Kent County Council's previous approach was complex and unpredictable compared to the other approaches. This approach was an average of the increase to staff who have been deemed successful in the prior year's performance management process and the average of up to eight bodies who use the Public Sector Pay Index (excluding bonuses) published by the Office of National Statistics. The eight bodies include: Armed Forces' Pay Review Body; Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration; NHS Pay Review Body; Prison Service Pay Review Body; School Teachers' Review Body; Senior Salaries Review Body; National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body; and Police Remuneration Review Body.

The approach adopted by KCC was complex and although it enables KCC to be as wide ranging as possible in the indexation methodology, the complexity, opacity and lack of predictive power relative to other simpler inflationary adjustment mechanisms mean that it is not fit for purpose.

Recommendation

The Panel considers that an indexation methodology should be simple, highly transparent & easily accessible and with a high predictability due to widespread use and

availability of information. Based on these criteria, the Panel favours the Consumer Price Index (CPI) approach.

There are two CPI measures that are widely used in the UK: CPIH (Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs), CPI (Consumer Prices Index).

CPIH - This is the headline measure of inflation used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and is considered the most comprehensive. It includes owner occupiers' housing costs, which are not included in the CPI.

CPI - This is a broader measure of inflation, similar to the European harmonised CPI. It excludes owner occupiers' housing costs, making it slightly different from CPIH

Of the two measures above, the Panel prefers the CPIH. EIM65960 - Local Government Councillors and civic dignitaries in England: ODPM guidance: Part One: Members' allowances defines the basic allowance as per below.

Basic allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of all councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers and constituents and attendance at political group meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of their homes. As the incidental use of the home is a key component that the basic allowance seeks to recognise we believe that the CPIH is the best measure of inflation to be adopted by Kent County Council for this review period.

The Panel recommends the use of the 12-month rate based on the figure for the 12-months to December of the year prior to the increase being applied for the annual uprating process for the next 3 years (until the next full review). This uprating will be applied to all the allowances except for the carers' allowance which will be adjusted using the Real Living Wage mechanism.

Summary of recommendations:

1. The Basic Allowance for 2026/7 be increased by 3.6% in line with the CPIH Index and methodology in the paragraph above.
2. The Basic Allowance be increased for the subsequent three years of the Scheme, in line with the CPIH Index, taken to be the one to the calendar year to December
3. Special Responsibility Allowances for 2026/7 be increased by 3.6% in line with the CPIH Index.

4. Special Responsibility Allowances be increased for the subsequent three years of the Scheme, in line with the CPIH Index, taken to be the one to the calendar year to December.
5. The Co-opted Member Allowance remain the same in 2026/27 as 2025/26, but increase at the same rate as the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances in subsequent years.
6. The Independent Persons allowance be changed to a fixed per annum payment of £700.
7. The Dependents' Carers' Allowance at the current level and compared annually with the Real Living Wage. Where the Real Living Wage is higher, then the Dependents' Carers' Allowance will be increased to the same level.
8. The current approach to travel and expenses should remain the same.
9. The Panel also recommends the following:
 - a. Review of job profile/descriptions for Members - Assessing KCC's profiles and descriptors for internal consistency and for comparison against other similar local authorities.
 - b. Communication of Members Allowances:
 - i. The training and awareness including Member Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements
 - ii. Awareness interventions on expense regime and available allowances.

Member Remuneration Panel

February 2026