

**Eric Hotson – Member for Maidstone Rural South
Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services**

Via email

Members' Desk
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent ME14 1XQ

Direct Dial: 03000 416274
E-Mail: eric.hotson@kent.gov.uk
Ask For: Eric Hotson
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Dear

Petition: 15% pay increase for KCC Councillors

I am writing to you in response to this petition to the council as you were the lead petitioner. As you may be aware, how the council responds to petitions depends on the number of people who have signed them. In the 3 months this e-petition was open it received 334 signatures and so this letter to you is the council's formal response to the petition.

This is in accordance with the rules that apply to all petitions which are set out at [www.kent.gov.uk/ data/assets/pdf_file/0010/3142/Constitution.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/3142/Constitution.pdf). This letter will also be published on the council's website.

Members of Kent County Council (KCC) receive a basic allowance to perform their duties; they do not receive a salary. Member Allowances were introduced to Local Authorities in accordance with Section 18 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Some elected members also receive an additional allowance, known as a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA), for any responsibility that they might have as a member of the council, such as being a Cabinet Member or a Committee Chairperson.

Up until the County Council meeting on 13 July 2017, allowances had been frozen for 8 years. To set some context, below is a chronological list of events for Member allowances since June 2009:

- **June 2009:** Members took the decision to take a 1.5% voluntary reduction to the basic allowance from £13,000 to £12,805; and the Leader's SRA was voluntarily reduced by 5.4% from £44,300 to £42,109. This reduction of 5.4% was cascaded down through the SRAs.
- **2013-2017:** Members agreed to maintain the Basic and Special Responsibilities Allowance at the levels set in 2009–2013, i.e. £12,805 for members and £42,109 for the Leader.

Those voluntary reductions to allowances in 2009 have saved the authority in the region of £1.5 million over the last 8 years.

Following this period of restraint I hope you would agree that it is fair and reasonable to re-calibrate Member Allowances and set a new, fair and reasonable remuneration level. It is worth mentioning that many Councillors rely on their remuneration for living expenses. National pay increases were looked at closely over the last 8 years, and the average increase in pay in the whole economy over this period (2008-2017) has been 16.7%. This figure is the average of both the public and private sector combined. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) has been 22.5% over the period.

On 13 July 2017, County Council agreed that member remuneration should be increased by 15%. This figure is below the settlement paid to our staff and average national earnings over the 8 year period. It may also be helpful to explain that elected members are not entitled to be part of the Local Government Pension Scheme, nor entitled to any redundancy payments when they leave office, unlike Members of Parliament.

KCC makes every effort to encourage a broader selection of candidates to stand for public office through working with schools and young people around decision making and promoting democracy. We will continue to look at new ways of encouraging younger candidates.

It is acknowledged that a serious barrier for young people to stand as a County Member is that meetings are held during the day. If they were moved to the evenings this would cause problems to the many existing Members who also represent District and Borough Councils which meet in the evenings.

Many KCC meetings are 3-4 hours long and can be all day, therefore it would not be possible to conduct all business in an evening session. Having said this there are many evening meetings which County Councillors attend, for example, Parish Councils, Joint Transportation Boards, School Governor Boards and residents' meetings.

You may be aware that Kent is the largest shire county in the UK and only Birmingham is a larger local authority. Kent has a population of 1,500,000 not including Medway and KCC has an annual gross budget of £2.1bn.

The average number of electors per councillor is 14,296. Members can attend meetings at over 300 Parish and Town Councils across the county. Last year there were over 150 daytime committee meetings at County Hall and 154 School and Transport Appeals where councillors often represent and assist parents and carers. 50 appointments are also made to outside bodies (such as the Fire Authority), where daytime and evening meeting are held across the county.

I hope this explains the reasoning behind this political decision. The agreed increase has now been implemented and allowances will be increased in line with staff pay annually as agreed by the County Council.

The full report from the 13 July County Council meeting, as well as previous years' Member Remuneration reports can be viewed at: www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/how-the-council-works/committees-and-meetings. You can also view the full press release on

Member Allowances on Kent County Council's media hub through the following link:
<https://kccmediahub.net/kcc-members-vote-increase-allowances745>.

Yours sincerely

Eric Hotson
Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services