

## **Executive Summary of Recommendations**

The Independent Remuneration Panel has met to consider a fundamental review of the Council's Scheme of Members' Allowances. The full report follows this summary of the recommendations, where the justification for our proposals is to be found.

The Panel's recommendations are:

**RECOMMENDATION 1 – That the Basic Allowance for 2017/18 be set at the present level of £5,097 for each councillor and that the indexation of the Basic Allowance for future years continue to be linked to the same percentage as is awarded to officers through the nationally negotiated wage settlement.**

**RECOMMENDATION 2 – That the supplement currently paid to councillors of £100 per annum to cover the costs of IT consumables, be included within the Allowances Scheme.**

**RECOMMENDATION 3 - That for the purposes of calculating special responsibility allowances and the indexation of allowances, only the core Basic Allowance (currently £5,097) i.e. without this supplement, continue to be used.**

**RECOMMENDATION 4 – That consideration of the SRAs for the roles of Chair, Vice Chair and Portfolio Holders on the Strategy Committee be deferred for 6 months to enable evidence to be gathered of the roles to be performed and for the roles of the Leader and Deputy Leader to be clarified.**

**RECOMMENDATION 5 – That as a holding position;-**

- A. the SRAs for the Leader of the Council and the Vice Chairman of the Executive be paid to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Strategy Committee (the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council); and**
- B. the SRAs currently paid to the Members of the Executive be paid to the appropriate positions within the new Strategy Committee, providing that in those positions, they performed the role of a Portfolio Holder as described in paragraph 7.11 of the new Constitution.**

**RECOMMENDATION 6 - That the SRA for the role of Chair and Vice Chair of the Council continue to be set at 1.25 x and 0.6 x the Basic Allowance respectively i.e. £6,372 and £3,057.**

**RECOMMENDATION 7 – That the SRAs payable to the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny, Audit and Planning Committees continue to be set at £6,372 per annum (1.25 x Basic Allowance).**

**RECOMMENDATION 8 – That the SRA payable to the Chair of the Licensing Committee be reduced to £5,097 per annum (1 x Basic Allowance).**

**RECOMMENDATION 9 – That the SRAs payable to the Vice Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committees continue to be set at £1,020 per annum (0.2 x Basic Allowance).**

**RECOMMENDATION 10 - That the SRA payable to the Vice Chair of the Planning Committee continue to be set at £1,530 per annum (0.3 x Basic Allowance).**

**RECOMMENDATION 11 - That the SRA payable to the Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee be reduced to £510 per annum (0.1 x Basic Allowance).**

**RECOMMENDATION 12 - That no action be taken to award an SRA to all members of the Planning Committee to recognise the additional workload and number of meetings.**

**RECOMMENDATION 13 – That consideration be given to including the responsibilities of the Champion for Domestic Violence Issues within the responsibilities of the appropriate Portfolio Holder on the Strategy Committee, but should this not be agreed then an SRA continue to be payable to the Champion for Domestic Violence Issues at the rate of £1272 per annum (0.25 x Basic Allowance).**

**RECOMMENDATION 14 - That the SRA payable to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group continue to be set at the rate of £1272 per annum (0.25 x Basic Allowance), but that within the Allowances Scheme the wording be changed to the “Leader of the Largest Opposition Group”.**

**RECOMMENDATION 15 - That currently there was little evidence to justify any additional SRA for the Chairs of the Joint Advisory Committees and that in the view of the Panel the chair of the relevant sovereign committee should chair the Joint Committee and this responsibility should be considered to be part of their SRA.**

**RECOMMENDATION 16 – That the Scheme of Allowances continues to specify that only one special responsibility allowance is permitted to be claimed by a member to whom the Scheme applies.**

**RECOMMENDATION 17 – That the remainder of the Allowances Scheme including the list of approved duties, relevant for travel and subsistence and carer claims, remain as in the current Scheme.**

## **Context Statement**

1. The Panel was asked to undertake a fundamental review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances and to report to the Council in May 2017.
2. The Panel was aware of the impending decision of the Secretary of State regarding Dorset's bid for unitary status and that the shelf life of any allowances scheme that was recommended, could be fairly short. Should the Secretary of State's decision be to not proceed with Dorset's bid, then it might be appropriate for the Panel to reconsider the allowances.
3. In the short time available to the Panel and in view of paragraph 2 above, there are a certain aspects that have been taken as read so that the Panel could concentrate on the key issues of the review.

## **Introduction**

4. The Independent Remuneration Panel has been established under the Local Government (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations, 2003, to make recommendations on councillors' allowances.
5. A new Panel was appointed in March, 2017 to undertake a joint review of the allowances schemes of the three Councils within the Dorset Council's Partnership and comprises

John Quinton, Local Government Adviser – Previous Head of Democratic Services at Wiltshire Council

Keith Broughton, a resident of North Dorset and Council tax payer, and retired HR professional

Daniel Cadisch, Bureau Manager, Dorchester and District Citizens Advice Bureau

Revd Pip Salmon, a resident of Weymouth and representing the faith sector

6. Our report with recommendations is made on the basis of evidence received and our best judgement of the needs of the Council as reflected by that evidence. Much of the evidence has come from meetings held with Group Leaders. Alongside this, various Officers of the Council have furnished us with information and advice. We are extremely grateful for all of this Member and Officer support.
7. As explained at Paragraph 2 and 3, although this is a fundamental review, which is required to be carried out at least every 4 years, the Panel has focussed on

key aspects of the Scheme of Allowances. It has however had regard to all aspects of the Scheme of Members' Allowances including:

- the level and purpose of the Basic Allowance that all councillors receive and which must be awarded at the same level for each councillor;
- the leadership and other roles within the Council that currently attract a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) on top of the Basic Allowance – the differentials between such allowances and whether all such roles and levels of allowance remain relevant to the Council for the future;
- the broader allowances scheme and the general support available to councillors.

8. Finally, whilst it is not within the remit of the Panel to consider the overall financial constraints under which the District Council is operating, the Panel is aware of the need to balance issues relating to members' allowances with other demands on Council budgets.

### **Primary Purpose of Review**

9. The primary purpose of our review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances is to ensure that the Scheme remains relevant. Our review complements the work of the previous Panels which has set a clear and robust framework for allowances to date.

10. The primary focus of the review are the changes to the political management arrangements of the council and the proposed new joint working arrangements with the three councils comprising the Dorset Council's Partnership.

### **Process and Methodology of the Review**

11. In undertaking the Review the Panel met on 21 and 27 March for initial briefing sessions and on 28 March, 4 and 11 April for interviews and deliberations.

12. The Panel met with the following Group Leaders:-

Councillor Alford – Leader of the Council

Councillor Barrowcliff – Corporate Portfolio Holder

Councillor Stella Jones – Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

13. In addition the following Councillors submitted representations to the Panel for consideration and where relevant these were discussed with the appropriate Group Leader:-

Councillor Stella Jones

Councillor Dave Rickard

Councillor Robin Potter

Councillor Jacqui Sewell

14. The Panel were provided with additional information from officers including comparative data across Dorset District Councils, copies of the Allowances Schemes for all three councils within the Dorset Council's Partnership, details of the Members Allowances Budget and the multipliers used to calculate the SRAs from the Basic Allowance.

### **Basic Allowance**

15. The Basic Allowance is currently £5,097 per member which is the same as Weymouth and Portland Borough Council and slightly more than North Dorset District Council, the other members of the Dorset Council's Partnership.

16. The Panel has looked at the formula set by the previous Panel in 2011 in determining the level of the Basic Allowance, which is an entitlement for each councillor in West Dorset District Council at the same level and recognises their general duties and responsibilities as elected councillors. The formula used originally to calculate the Basic Allowance is based on the Local Government Association (LGA) published daily rate x 32 days (33% voluntary discount on 48 days per year for Council business). The 48 days was calculated on the basis of evidence provided by councillors at a previous fundamental review as to their average time commitment. The voluntary element reduction reflects central government guidance that a number of hours committed by councillors on Council business should be unremunerated.

17. Because of the disparity between the increase in the LGA day rate and local pay rates for employees and local government finance in general, the use of the day rate ceased to be used in 2011.

18. The consensus amongst Group Leaders was that the workload of ward councillors varied enormously but in any case, the estimate used by previous Panels was out of date. The estimates from Group Leaders was that on average, councillors committed 12-15 hours per week to council business. However, whilst the formula used to calculate the Basic Allowance was out of date in terms of the number of days used, the level at which it was set in numeric terms, was about right and it was comparable across the Partnership.

19. On this basis the Panel were of the view that as no evidence had been presented to them to the contrary, there was no reason to increase the allowance.

**RECOMMENDATION 1 – That the Basic Allowance for 2017/18 be set at the present level of £5097 for each councillor and that the indexation of the Basic Allowance for future years continue to be linked to the same percentage as is awarded to officers through the nationally negotiated wage settlement.**

## IT Provision for Councillors

20. Whilst this issue had not been raised specifically with the Panel, it had been raised by councillors serving in the other councils in the Partnership. On the basis that support to councillors should be aligned wherever possible, the Panel gave some brief attention to the present practices of the Council with regard to the provision of IT equipment for councillors.

21. Officers have provided the Panel with a statement of current practice as follows:-

“The Partnership has committed to introducing paperless committee meetings as part of the overall digital by default programme and the introduction of a committee management system which provides an app for easy access to committee papers. Paperless meetings will help the Dorset Council’s Partnership (DCP) to achieve significant savings from reducing our print budget, approx. £50,000 per year across the partnership and the DCP received Transitional Challenge Award funding to help us provide mobile devices for councillors.

Councillors have been offered the choice of a laptop or a tablet, both of which will be compatible with the Modern.gov app. The roll out of the laptops starts on 30<sup>th</sup> March. The roll out of the tablets was due to take place over the first 3 weeks of April, however this has had to be postponed as the tablets have been recalled by the manufacturer for a fault with the life of the battery. New timescales for the roll out of tablets have not been confirmed but I would hope that they would be back from the manufacturer and rebuilt by IT by the end of April, this would enable us to roll out the tablets in May and look to start paperless meetings June/July.”

22. The Panel was aware that in addition to the Basic Allowance, councillors were also given an allowance of £100 per annum to cover the cost of ICT consumables. However, this did not appear in the Allowances Scheme and the Panel felt that for transparency purposes, that it should.

**RECOMMENDATION 2 – That the supplement currently paid to councillors of £100 per annum to cover the costs of IT consumables, be included within the Allowances Scheme.**

**RECOMMENDATION 3 - That for the purposes of calculating special responsibility allowances and the indexation of allowances, only the core Basic Allowance (currently £5097) i.e. without this supplement, continue to be used.**

### Special Responsibility Allowances

23. The Members Allowances Regulations state that “a special responsibility allowance (SRA) may be paid to those members of the council who have significant additional responsibilities over and above the generally accepted duties of a councillor”. The regulations list the categories of responsibilities which might call for an SRA. Guidance from Government released in association with the Regulations do not limit the number of SRAs payable nor do they prohibit the payment of more than

one SRA. However, within the guidance the Government sets an expectation that the proportion of SRAs should not exceed 50% of the total number of councillors. The Panel understands that currently the level within the Council is at approximately 45% (42 councillors, 19 of whom have SRAs).

24. The Panel has spoken to Group Leaders about the present structure of special responsibilities and whether the differentials between SRAs are about right. It is perhaps fair to point out that not all special responsibility work is immediately visible to others e.g. meetings with officers, reading up on key policies of the council and other bodies, planning presentations etc.

25. SRAs are currently calculated as a value of the core Basic Allowance (BA) – see our recommendation 3 above and we see no reason to move away from that practice as it is open and transparent and shows a clear linkage and distinction from the duties undertaken by all Councillors.

26. Set out below is the existing banding of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs).

- (a) Chairman of Council - £6372 per annum (1.25 x BA)
- (b) Vice-chairman of Council - £3057 per annum (0.6 x BA)
- (c) Leader of Council - £15291 per annum (3 x BA)
- (d) Members of the Executive Committee - £7644 per annum (1.5 x BA)
- (e) Vice-chairman of the Executive Committee - £8667 per annum (1.7 x BA)
- (f) Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny, Audit, Planning and Licensing Committees - £6372 per annum (1.25 x BA)
- (g) Vice-chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny, Audit and Licensing Committees - £1020 per annum (0.2 x BA)
- (h) Vice-chairman of Planning Committee - £1530 per annum (0.3 x BA)
- (i) Non-Executive Champion for Domestic Violence Issues - £1272 per annum (0.25 x BA)
- (j) Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group - £1272 per annum (0.25 x BA)

27. As an introduction to the discussion on the issue of SRAs the Leader of the Council briefed the Panel on the way the current Council worked. This was very different than 2011 when the Panel had last met to consider allowances. Indeed in his opinion that change was more significant than the current issue facing the Panel in terms of the change to the political management arrangements. The Council was a much more member-led organisation now and with the very lean management structures of the Partnership, leading councillors had a significant role in establishing policy and priorities.

## **The transition from an executive model to a committee system**

28. The Panel recognised that whilst individual decision making was not a feature of West Dorset's Executive, the importance to the Council of executive members playing a leading role in the drive for increased efficiency and building effective partnerships was always recognised. Similarly, Portfolio holders on the Strategy Committee will be important but will need time to establish their roles.

29. The Leader was very clear that it was important from a public perspective and in response to the outcome of the recent referendum, that the Strategy Committee should provide an open and transparent forum at which leading councillors could be held to public account by the opposition group.

30. Currently it was planned for the Strategy Committee to have 10 members and based on the current political proportionality of the Council, the Liberal Democrat Group would have 3 seats. The Leader emphasised that they would have a very important role in holding the majority group to public account and in fulfilling an opposition spokesperson role.

31. The Panel were aware of the roles proposed for Portfolio Holders as set out in the proposed Constitution and these were very similar to those of Brief Holders on the Weymouth and Portland Borough Council's Management Committee.

32. However the Leader emphasised that it was not proposed to replicate that Council's arrangements as the two councils were quite distinct culturally and politically. Indeed, it should not be assumed that all members of the Strategy Committee would hold portfolios. This would be a matter for the Strategy Committee to decide at its first meeting.

## **The Chair of the Strategy Committee and Portfolio Holders**

33. The Panel recognised that the Chair of the Strategy Committee would be elected by the Council and would be known as the Leader. They were aware that the intention was that the Leader would fulfil and perform the same role as the Leader under the current executive arrangements. However, the Panel accepted that statutorily, the role would not have the same powers and responsibilities. Indeed, currently there was no specific role contained within the proposed new Constitution for either the Leader or Deputy Leader.

34. The role of the Portfolio Holder was however specified within the proposed Constitution and in the view of the Panel this represented a full and significant role. As mentioned in paragraph 32 above, it was not clear currently what portfolios and how many would be established.

35. The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group was of the view that all members of the Strategy Committee should hold portfolios and be treated as equals. However, she appreciated that this was within the gift of the Leader and that this would not be decided until the first meeting of the Strategy Committee. In her view though, since the new Leader had been elected, the opposition group had been more involved in decision making as the Leader had increasingly allowed individual executive



members to take responsibility for their own portfolios and she hoped that this would transfer into the new arrangements. Indeed, she felt that the public would expect that as a result of the referendum, opposition councillors would have a role in decision making and hold a brief within the Strategy Committee.

36. The Panel appreciated the various perspectives that they had been given on the operation of the Strategy Committee. However, there was a substantial gap in the amount of evidence they had been given and within the constitution, which prevented them from coming to a view on SRAs for the Chair and Portfolio Holders on the Strategy Committee. The Panel were clear that SRAs were only payable for positions with significant responsibility attached to them and currently there was little evidence other than the role proposed for Portfolio Holders within the constitution. The role of opposition members on the committee required clarification as simply performing a role that held the majority group to account and providing political opposition was not a significant responsibility in its own right. In addition, the role of the Leader and Deputy Leader, irrespective of whether they held specific portfolios, required clarification. In view of the changes to the political management arrangements it was really important from a transparency perspective that in line with other local authorities, the roles and responsibilities of the Leader and Deputy Leader, over and above their membership of the Strategy Committee, should be clearly stated.

37. On this basis the Panel agreed that they could not formulate recommendations on these issues until more information was available. Therefore, it would defer making such recommendations but that as a holding position, the SRAs currently paid to the Leader of the Council, the Vice Chairman of the Executive and the Members of the Executive should continue to be paid to the appropriate positions within the new arrangements, providing that in those positions they performed the role of a Portfolio Holder as described in paragraph 7.11 of the new Constitution.

**RECOMMENDATION 4 – That consideration of the SRAs for the roles of Chair, Vice Chair and Portfolio Holders on the Strategy Committee be deferred for 6 months to enable evidence to be gathered of the roles to be performed and for the roles of the Leader and Deputy Leader to be clarified.**

**RECOMMENDATION 5 – That as a holding position;-**

- A. the SRAs for the Leader of the Council and the Vice Chairman of the Executive be paid to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Strategy Committee (the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council); and**
- B. the SRAs currently paid to the Members of the Executive be paid to the appropriate positions within the new Strategy Committee, providing that in those positions, they performed the role of a Portfolio Holder as described in paragraph 7.11 of the new Constitution.**

## **Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council**

38. The Panel is aware that the previous Panel had made a recommendation to reduce the SRA payable to the Chair of Council and to remove the SRA payable to the Vice Chair.

39. The Panel has not received any evidence to suggest that there should be any change to either of these SRA's and we believe therefore that the value of these SRA's should be retained at the current level.

**RECOMMENDATION 6 - That the SRA for the role of Chair and Vice Chair of the Council continue to be set at 1.25 x and 0.6 x the Basic Allowance respectively i.e. £6,372 and £3,057.**

## **Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny, Audit, Planning and Licensing Committees**

40. The SRAs currently payable to these positions are £6,372 per annum and comprise 1.25 x BA.

41. The Panel has only received one representation concerning these roles and that suggested that the SRA received by the Chair of Licensing Committee was disproportionate compared to the other Chairs. On investigation, the Panel were informed that the Committee only met twice in the last municipal calendar year whereas all the other committees met on a far more frequent basis. Whilst frequency of meetings is not the major determinant of responsibility, it does reflect on the roles and responsibilities of the chair. The time, effort and commitment involved in chairing this Committee and the degree of engagement required outside of the meetings appears to be significantly less than for other committees.

**RECOMMENDATION 7 – That the SRAs payable to the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny, Audit and Planning Committees continue to be set at £6,372 per annum (1.25 x Basic Allowance).**

**RECOMMENDATION 8 – That the SRA payable to the Chair of the Licensing Committee be reduced to £5,097 per annum (1 x Basic Allowance).**

## **Vice Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny, Audit, Planning and Licensing Committees**

42. As mentioned at paragraph 38, the Panel is aware that previous Panels have made recommendations to remove the SRAs payable to the Vice Chairs of Committees. The Panel remains of this view but due to the time constraints previously mentioned within this report, hasn't been able to test the evidence taken by previous Panels in making their recommendations. On this basis, it is unable to make further recommendations on this matter but wishes it to be recognised that as part of the 6 month review referred to in Recommendation 4 above, it will wish to take evidence to justify these SRA's, recognising that the payment of these SRAs could take the Council above the 50% guideline for the number of SRA's (as referred to in paragraph 23 above).

43. In line with the decision set out at Recommendation 8 above, and to maintain existing differentials, the Panel was of the view that the SRA payable to the Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee should also be reduced.

**RECOMMENDATION 9 – That the SRAs payable to the Vice Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committees continue to be set at £1,020 per annum (0.2 x Basic Allowance).**

**RECOMMENDATION 10 - That the SRA payable to the Vice Chair of the Planning Committee continue to be set at £1,530 per annum (0.3 x Basic Allowance).**

**RECOMMENDATION 11 - That the SRA payable to the Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee be reduced to £510 per annum (0.1 x Basic Allowance).**

### **Planning Committee Members**

44. The Panel received a representation that all members of the Planning Committee should receive an additional allowance to reflect the frequency and length of its meetings. Based on the workload of other committees the Panel has sympathy with this view. However, it would create an unusual precedent for the Panel to recognise this workload by awarding an SRA for all of the members of the Planning Committee. Apart from taking the Council well above the 50% guideline for the number of SRA's (as referred to in paragraph 23 above) the Panel felt that this type of regulatory work appealed to certain councillors and attracted them to serve on the committee knowing full well what the workload entailed.

**RECOMMENDATION 12 - That no action be taken to award an SRA to all members of the Planning Committee to recognise the additional workload and number of meetings.**

### **Non – Executive Champion for Domestic Violence Issues**

45. The Panel received evidence from Group Leaders that this position was still very important and relevant to the work of the Council. Good work had been undertaken across the county by the current champion. However, the suggestion was made that perhaps this role should be included within a Strategy Committee portfolio.

**RECOMMENDATION 13 – That consideration be given to including the responsibilities of the Champion for Domestic Violence Issues within the responsibilities of the appropriate Portfolio Holder on the Strategy Committee, but should this not be agreed then an SRA continue to be payable to the Champion for Domestic Violence Issues at the rate of £1272 per annum (0.25 x Basic Allowance).**

### **Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group**

46. The Panel were aware that an SRA was payable to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and that a representation had been made to the Panel that this should be based on the numbers of councillors within the group so that there was a

differentiation between the responsibilities of leading a large group of members as opposed to a small group.

47. The Panel recognised this but as there was only currently provision within the Allowances Scheme for the Liberal Democrat Group, did not feel that this was an issue. The Panel did however feel that the wording should be changed to the Leader of the largest opposition group.

**RECOMMENDATION 14 - That the SRA payable to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group continue to be set at the rate of £1272 per annum (0.25 x Basic Allowance), but that within the Allowances Scheme the wording be changed to the “Leader of the Largest Opposition Group”.**

### **Joint Arrangements**

48. In 2016 the Council agreed to Joint Arrangements including the appointment of a Joint Advisory Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JAOSC) and Joint Advisory Accounts and Audit Committee (JAAAC). The former was to act as an advisor on matters in relation to the discharge of functions of: (i) the Council; and/or (ii) any of the partner councils forming the Dorset Councils Partnership. The JAOSC will consist of fifteen members. Each Council making up the Dorset Councils Partnership shall appoint five Members to JAOSC. The JAAAC was (a) To act as an advisor on matters referred to in relation to: (i) internal and external audit issues, and/or (ii) financial risk management; and/or (iii) internal financial controls; and/or (iv) corporate governance; and /or (v) financial accounts, in all cases to the extent that such matters have relevance to all of the partner councils that make up the Dorset Councils Partnership. The JAAAC will consist of twenty-one Members. Each Council making up the Dorset Councils Partnership shall appoint seven members to JAAAC.

49. It was understood that the chair of each Committee would rotate each year from Council to Council.

50. Evidence has been presented to the Panel that the joint arrangements may evolve in such a way as to reduce the workloads of the relevant sovereign committees of the individual councils. The thinking is that as services are being provided across all three councils as one service rather than three different services, any scrutiny or audit function would look at them collectively rather than individually. This in the view of the Panel is a distinct possibility with the increasing joint service provision across the three councils.

51. This was discussed with Group Leaders who clearly felt that the sovereign committees would continue to set their own agenda and would wish to deal with issues within their own council. Certainly, Group Leaders understood that from an aspirational point of view increased joint working at committee level was very sensible. In reality there were enough local differences within the district council area let alone across the three councils. Whilst it was difficult at this stage to gauge the workload there would undoubtedly be areas where the joint committees could add value.

52. In addition, we have spoken to Group Leaders across the other two councils for their views on how these joint arrangements might work as well as the Chief Executive and a Service Manager engaged in the delivery of front line service across all three councils.

53. Across the other Councils the view of Group Leaders was mixed. In one respect the differences between the councils were such that services may need to be looked at differently and there would anyway still be a need for each council to maintain a sovereign committee. Also, the evolution of these joint committees was at an early stage and it was difficult to estimate their future workload.

54. Having interviewed the Head of Housing it was clear that from an officer perspective what the benefits of the joint arrangements were. He was already holding joint briefings for all portfolio holders/brief holders across all three councils. This was a much more effective use of his time and provided for a dynamic, whereby comparable issues could be dealt with.

55. There is currently little evidence to justify any additional SRA for the Joint Advisory Committees. What evidence existed was purely anecdotal and across the three councils, the views varied as to the likely workload and responsibilities of these committees. If as forecast, the workloads of the Joint Committees increased at the same time as the workloads of the sovereign committees decreased and the chair of the joint committees is rotated, then in the view of the Panel arrangements should be put in place to ensure that the chair of the relevant sovereign committee should chair the Joint Committee and that this should be considered to be included as part of their SRA when it was the turn of that council to chair the joint committee. Over a period of three years (the interval between councils chairing the joint committees) the balance of workloads and responsibilities for the chairs of the sovereign committees would balance out.

56. The Panel recognised however that the workload of the Joint Committees may evolve over time, particularly with the potential for more local government reorganisation on the horizon, and in this case, this was an area to keep under review.

**RECOMMENDATION 15 - That currently there was little evidence to justify any additional SRA for the Chairs of the Joint Advisory Committees and that in the view of the Panel the chair of the relevant sovereign committee should chair the Joint Committee and that this responsibility should be considered to be part of their SRA.**

### **Number of Special Responsibility Allowances**

57. The present Scheme of Allowances permits members to claim only one special responsibility allowance, even if the member performs more than one role that attracts such an allowance.

58. We have considered whether there is merit in permitting a member who holds more than one position that attracts an SRA access to all or part of the second allowance. On balance, we believe that the present arrangement remains appropriate.

**RECOMMENDATION 16 – That the Scheme of Allowances continues to specify that only one special responsibility allowance is permitted to be claimed by a member to whom the Scheme applies.**

#### **Remainder of the Scheme of Allowances**

59. The Panel has considered the remainder of the Scheme of Allowances including present travel and subsistence allowances for councillors, approved duties and care allowances.

60. We have received no evidence to suggest that there is a need to change any of these allowances and therefore recommend that they remain unchanged.

**RECOMMENDATION 17 – That the remainder of the Allowances Scheme including the list of approved duties, relevant for travel and subsistence and carer claims, remain as in the current Scheme.**