

Part 5. Scheme of Members' Allowances

Dorset Council

Members' Allowances Scheme 2026/27

1. The payment of allowances to elected members of local authorities is governed by the Local Government (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 ("the Regulations"). This scheme is for 2026/27 and is effective from 1 April 2026.

Entitlement to Allowances

2. This scheme provides guidance in respect of:

- a basic allowance;
- special responsibility allowances;
- a dependant carers' allowance;
- travel allowances for duties undertaken within Dorset Council area;
- travel and subsistence allowances for duties undertaken outside the Dorset Council area; and,
- an allowance to co-opted and independent members.

Basic Allowance

- 3.1 Elected members of Dorset Council receive a basic allowance to recognise the time devoted to carry out their work as councillors, including attendance at meetings, and ward activities. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as in-area subsistence, use of members' homes and private telephones and any IT consumables.
- 3.2 For 2026/27 the basic allowance of £16,000 will be paid in equal monthly instalments. No individual may receive more than one basic allowance.
- 3.3 The basic allowance will be updated annually to reflect the annual pay award to local government officers. Where a consolidated fixed sum pay award is made, the basic allowance will be increased by the percentage increase applied to salary scale point 43.
- 3.4 The basic allowance will be adjusted with effect from 1 April 2026 and will continue to be adjusted on an annual basis for the period up to 31 March 2029.

Special Responsibility Allowances

- 4.1 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) are paid in addition to the basic allowance to members who hold positions with significant responsibilities over and above the general duties of a councillor and are also paid in equal monthly instalments.
- 4.2 Members may not receive more than one SRA.

4.3 With effect from 1 April 2026, SRAs are payable as follows:

	£ per annum
Leader of the Council	38,000
Executive / Cabinet Members (including Deputy Leader)	23,500
Chair of the Council	11,000
Vice-chair of the Council	5,500
Chairs of Audit and Governance Committee, Overview committees, Scrutiny committees and all planning committees (including strategic)	11,000
Chair of the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee	7,500
Chairs of all other committees listed in Article 8 and the Dorset Police and Crime Panel and the Corporate Parenting Board in Article 11 of the Dorset Council Constitution	5,500
Minority Group Leaders (Note: minority parties must have a membership of not less than 10% of Dorset Council for their Leader to receive an SRA)	5,500

4.4 No SRAs are paid to vice-chairs of committees.

4.5 The SRAs will be updated annually to reflect the annual pay award to local government officers. Where a consolidated fixed sum pay award is made, the SRAs will be increased by the percentage increase applied to salary scale point 43.

4.6 The SRAs will be adjusted with effect from 1 April 2026 and will continue to be adjusted on an annual basis for the period up to 31 March 2029.

4.7 Where a member is suspended or partially suspended from their duties as a member of Dorset Council in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000, or regulations made under that part, the part of the SRA payable to them in respect of the period for which they are suspended or partially suspended shall be withheld.

Travelling Allowance

5.1 Travelling allowance is paid in line with the HMRC Mileage Allowance Payments (MAP). The current MAP approved amounts are:

- i) car (including electric vehicles) – 55p per mile up to 10,000 and 25p per mile thereafter;

- ii) passenger payments – up to 5p per mile per passenger (up to a maximum of four) to be claimed only for passengers who would otherwise be eligible for travelling allowance;
- iii) motorcycle – 24p per mile;
- iv) bicycle – 20p per mile;
- v) in relation to public transport (including rail and bus) - standard fare; and
- vi) parking fees – actual cost.

5.2 Travelling allowance can be claimed for the following approved duties:

- a) attendance at meetings of the Council, the Cabinet/Executive, and of those committees and sub-committees, panels, joint committees, consultative bodies and working groups of which the claimant is a member, or has a right to attend, under the council's Constitution;
- b) attendance at meetings of the Cabinet/Executive, and of those committees and sub-committees, panels, joint committees, consultative bodies and working groups when expressly invited to attend and speak;
- c) attendance at meetings of the Cabinet/Executive and committees, where a member who is not a member of the Cabinet/Executive or the committee, has attended to speak or observe;
- d) attendance for a meeting with an officer or a member in receipt of an SRA, for the purpose of discussing matters relating exclusively to council business, in which it is reasonable to expect the member to have an interest;
- e) duties undertaken by members appointed to serve on partner and other organisations except where those bodies pay travelling and/or subsistence allowances and members should therefore claim those allowances direct from those bodies and not from the council;
- f) attendance at parish meetings and town or parish council meetings in a member's ward (when they are not a member of that town or parish council);
- g) attendance at conferences, seminars and training events authorised by the Director – Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer after consultation with the relevant member of the Executive/Cabinet;
- h) attendance at seminars and briefing meetings for members convened by the Chief Executive, a director or service head, e.g. on service planning, new legislation and on service and policy issues, and at meetings to discuss particular local issues;
- i) exhibitions, official openings and visits to premises, or similar events, to

which members have been invited or approved to attend by the Chief Executive, a director or a service head;

j) attendance at consultation meetings with the public or other organisations arranged by the Chief Executive, a director or a service head; and

k) attendance at the opening of tenders when specifically requested in accordance with Article 14 of the council's constitution.

Notes:

- a) Travelling allowances may not be claimed for political group meetings;*
- b) except in the case of meetings of a single party Cabinet/Executive, travelling allowances may not be claimed for meetings to which members of only one political group have been invited; and*
- c) if any member is in any doubt about a particular duty please check with the Democratic Services Team.*

5.3 Where a member is suspended or partially suspended from their duties as a Dorset Councillor in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000, or regulations made under that part, the part of travelling allowance payable to them in respect of the period for which they are suspended or partially suspended shall be withheld.

Subsistence Allowances

6.1 Subsistence allowances for meals and accommodation can be reimbursed to Dorset Council members for duties undertaken outside the ceremonial Dorset county (which includes the unitary council area of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole). This allowance reflects the scheme in place for officers of Dorset Council.

6.2 Members of Dorset Council are entitled to claim subsistence if their duties mean that they are away from the ceremonial Dorset county for at least 5 hours, preventing them from following their normal meal arrangements AND they have to incur expenditure which is in addition to their normal outlay.

6.3 Any claims for subsistence costs must be for the actual amount paid (up to the maximum amount claimable) and supporting receipts of this cost must be kept by the member. The amounts claimable are cumulative across meal times. Therefore, one amount can be claimed depending on the length of time away. The reimbursement of costs associated with alcohol will not be paid under any circumstances.

6.4 The maximum amounts that be claimed are as follows:

Length of trip (for each day midnight to midnight)	Maximum amount claimable
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At least 5 hours outside of the ceremonial county*	£6.17*
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At least 10 hours outside of the ceremonial county* £12.34*

At least 15 hours outside the ceremonial county* £18.51*

* Supplement where journey ends After 8pm (can be claimed in addition to above amounts if staying overnight) £12.34

Accommodation (room only) £113.50 including VAT (or £148 including VAT for Greater and Inner London)

****Where the qualifying journey in respect of the claim lasts beyond 8pm an additional supplementary amount of up to £12.34 can be claimed to cover additional expenditure expenses incurred as a result of working late, this additional expenditure must be supported by receipts.***

6.5 Where a member is suspended or partially suspended from their duties as a Dorset Councillor in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000, or regulations made under that part, the part of subsistence allowance payable to them in respect of the period for which they are suspended or partially suspended shall be withheld.

Dependant Carers' Allowance

7.1 The dependant carers' allowance is designed to compensate members for expenses incurred while providing care for dependants or requiring specialist care themselves, ensuring that members can fulfil their duties without financial disadvantage.

7.2 This scheme provides a distinction between formal specialised care and informal care as follows:

- Formal specialised care - the allowance provides for the reimbursement of the actual expenditure, subject to prior agreement with the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services and the provision of appropriate invoices/receipts and certification by the member that the amounts claimed have actually been incurred
- Informal care - the maximum allowance payable shall be the national minimum wage (£12.71 per hour as at April 2026) and is payable subject to the carer providing a written receipt (as agreed by the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services and the member making the claim) and certification that the amounts claimed have actually been incurred

In respect of informal care, the claimant's own household are not excluded, except where a person acting as a carer already has joint

caring responsibilities - payment is subject to the prior agreement of the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services.

- 7.3 Both elements of this allowance are payable for the care of dependants whether children, elderly people or people with disabilities while the member is on council business and where travel allowances are payable or otherwise by prior agreement with the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services.
- 7.4 Any members of the council requiring specialist care or support for themselves should agree this provision with the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services and the actual cost will be reimbursed upon production of receipts.

Co-opted and Independent Members' allowance

- 8.1 Co-opted and independent members of committees and other persons appointed to sit on panels and for a constituted meeting by the council, are entitled to claim travelling and carer's allowances in accordance with this scheme. They may also claim subsistence allowance for attendance at meetings.

- 8.2 A separate allowance, as set out below, is payable to:

	£ per annum
The co-opted members of the overview and scrutiny committees with oversight of education matters	500
The co-opted members of the Dorset Police and Crime Panel	2000
The independent persons appointed to contribute to the arrangements of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct	1000
The independent persons appointed to the Harbours Advisory Committee	1000
The co-opted members appointed to the Audit and Governance Committee	2000

- 8.3 The allowance for co-opted and independent members will be updated annually to reflect the annual pay award to local government officers. Where a consolidated fixed sum pay award is made, the allowances will be increased by the percentage increase applied to salary scale point 43.
- 8.4 The allowances will be adjusted with effect from 1 April 2026 and will continue to be adjusted on an annual basis for the period up to 31 March 2029.

Submission of Claims

- 9.1 Claims for allowances must be made electronically.
- 9.2 Claims must be made on a monthly basis.
- 9.3 When submitting claims electronically, VAT receipts for fuel, car park tickets/receipts and those for public transport and subsistence must be retained by the individual member and be made available for verification upon request. In the case of claims submitted on a claim form, these should be attached.
- 9.4 Hard copy claim forms will be made available for co-opted members.

Pensions

- 10. The Authority shall enable its members who are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Forgoing Allowances

- 11. Members of Dorset Council may, if they wish, forgo all or any part of their entitlement to any basic allowance or special responsibility allowance by giving notice in writing to the Director – Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer.

Taxation of Allowances and Social Security Benefits

- 12.1 Allowances will be subject to the normal PAYE and National Insurance regulations in force at the time.
- 12.2 In order to avoid over-payment of income tax or National Insurance contributions, claims for payment of allowances must be submitted monthly.

Enquiries

- 13. If you have any queries about this scheme please contact the Democratic and Governance Services Team.