

WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT
REMUNERATION PANEL ON MEMBERS'
ALLOWANCES LEVELS FOR 2009-2010**

**For submission to the Council on
15 July 2009**

Introduction

1. In accordance with regulations laid down by government the Council appointed an Independent Remuneration Panel in 2003 to review levels of allowance paid to Members. In each of the following Municipal Years, the Panel has made recommendations on the levels of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance for consideration by the Council. Details of the Panel's remit are described below.

The Independent Remuneration Panel

2. The Panel comprised the following Members:

Robin Cops

Robin Cops has been a resident of Wokingham Borough for the last 25 years. Following a 35 year career with an international chemical engineering company he now acts part time as a management consultant. He is also a Governor at St.Crispin's School and Bracknell and Wokingham College and a Magistrate on the East Berks Bench.

Reverend Michael Forrer

Reverend Michael Forrer is a resident of Charvil and is the Associate Vicar of the local Parish Church. Following a career in the Royal Artillery, he was ordained as a priest in 1960, later becoming a Worker Priest working in the private sector with such companies as IBM and Cable & Wireless.

Geoff Wilde

Geoff Wilde has been a resident of Wokingham Borough for the last 25 years. He worked for IBM for 33 years until his retirement in 2002. He is a Community Governor at St.Crispin's School and a volunteer with Wokingham CAB.

Ella Hutchings, Principal Democratic Services Officer, provided guidance and administrative support to the Panel.

Background and national context

3. The Local Government (Local Authority Members in England) Regulations which came into force into 2003 stated that Independent Remuneration Panels established by local authorities should make recommendations in respect of the following issues:
 - **Basic Allowance (BA)** – each local authority must make provision for a basic, flat rate payable to all Members;
 - **Special Responsibility allowance (SRA)** – each local authority may make provision for the payment of Special Responsibility Allowances to those Councillors who have significant additional responsibilities. The Panel has to recommend the responsibilities that should be remunerated and the levels of each allowance;
 - **Childcare and dependents' carers' allowance** – local authorities may make provision for the payment of an allowance to those Councillors who incur expenditure for the care of children or dependent relatives whilst undertaking particular duties;

- **Travel and subsistence allowance** – local authorities may make provision for the payment of a travelling and subsistence allowance to its Councillors for undertaking a list of eligible duties as defined in the current scheme;
 - **Co-optees' allowance** – local authorities may make provision for the payment of an allowance to co-optees for attending meetings, conferences and seminars.
4. The Regulations also provide for Panels to make recommendations in respect of the following issues:
- The cessation of payments to members who have been suspended or partially suspended from their duties, and the repayment of allowances;
 - The backdating of allowances to the beginning of the financial year in which they are set, and provision to recommend annual adjustments by means of an index;
 - Whether some or all Councillors should be eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Terms of reference for the 2009-2010 review

5. The Panel's 2008-2009 Members' Allowances Scheme recommendations were agreed by the Council on 30 October 2008, apart from their recommendation regarding the increase to the Basic Allowance amount. The recommendation was to increase the Basic Allowance to £7,000, but the Council resolved to keep the Basic Allowance the same as the previous year, at £6,750.
6. The Panel decided to do a more extensive review this year. As indicated in the 2008-2009 report, the Panel had commissioned a survey of Councillors' time. The statistical results of this survey were analysed by the Panel, together with the many comments attached by Members. Additionally, the Panel reconsidered items such as the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, following the new Scrutiny process put in place in November 2008, and Deputy Executive Members, left open in their last report.
7. The Panel was asked to consider the following issues raised by Members and Officers during the course of the year:
- The level of the Basic Allowance;
 - The level of the Special Responsibility Allowance;
 - The Benchmarking of Allowances against other local Councils;
 - SRA payments for Standards Committee Members;
 - Scrutiny function changes and a new SRA level for the Management Committee Chairman and SRA payments for Panel Chairmen;
 - SRA payments for the role of Deputy Executive Members;
 - The continued payment of a SRA to Planning Committee Members;
 - Mileage payments and the list of activities for which payment would be made;
 - Childcare and dependent carers allowance level;
 - Support and facilities for Members;
 - Incentives for Members to attend training sessions;
 - Pensionability;

- Recommending whether an element of the Basic Allowance should be given a Tax Dispensation;
 - Payment of more than one SRA to a member.
8. In respect of the further provisions identified in paragraphs 3 and 4 above, the Council had previously adopted the Panel's recommendations as follows:
- That allowances be withheld from any Member for the duration of any suspension;
 - That, in the event of a Member being partially suspended, the allowance(s) applicable to the areas of activity from which the Member was suspended be withheld;
 - That the allowances scheme should continue to include reference to a mechanism whereby a Member may elect to forgo any part of their entitlement to allowances under the Scheme.

After consideration the Panel decided there were no reasons to change the above recommendations.

Work programme

9. The Panel met on the following occasions:

- 26 February 2009;
- 19 March 2009;
- 2 April 2009;
- 8 April 2009;
- 23 April 2009;
- 29 April 2009;
- 5 May 2009;
- 8 May 2009;
- 21 May 2009;
- 28 May 2009;
- 15 June 2009;
- 24 June 2009.

In addition, Members of the Panel maintained regular telephone, e-mail and postal contact between each other and with Officers in the Democratic Services Section.

Robin Cops and Reverend Michael Forrer also attended a networking event for Remuneration Panel Members from across the South East region to share good practice and information.

10. The Panel received, and had made reference to, the following information to provide background, context and assistance in reaching its conclusions:
- Copies of the current Members' Allowances Scheme agreed by the Council in October 2008, and previous versions;
 - Copies of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003;
 - Benchmarking information on allowance levels paid by other local authorities;

- Independent Remuneration reports/Members Allowances Schemes of other Local Authorities, including Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, the City of York Council and Guildford Borough Council;
 - Budgetary provision for Members' Allowances – projected 2008-2009 outturn and 2009-2010 base budget;
 - Slides, notes and information relating to a workshop at Birmingham University attended by Robin Cops and Ella Hutchings in 2008 on 'Members' Allowances: Post 2003 Regulations – Approaches, Patterns and Issues';
 - Relevant extracts from the 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' white paper;
 - Relevant extracts from 'Representing the future', the report of the Councillors Commission, December 2007;
 - An update paper on 'Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007' published December 2007;
 - The, 'Members remuneration – models, issues, incentives and barriers', report produced for the Councillors Commission in December 2007 by Dr Declan Hall and Sir Rodney Brooke of the School of Public Policy, University of Birmingham;
 - The results of the Local Government Association and the Improvement and Development Agency Members' Allowances Survey 2008.
11. A Members' Allowances Survey was created and sent to all Members on behalf of the Panel, seeking to understand the time commitment required of Councillors and to seek their views on certain areas of the Scheme. The survey asked for any verbal or written representations Councillors wished to make (a copy of the survey is attached at Appendix 1 and a summary of the results is attached at Appendix 2). 43 surveys were returned from Councillors and following the survey 17 Councillors were interviewed.
 12. The Panel also had representation from David Soane, an Independent Member of the Standards Committee and Kevin Jacob, Principal Democratic Services Officer.
 13. The Panel members met with Susan Law, Chief Executive, to discuss any queries/concerns she might have had about Members' Allowances and to get her input on certain issues.

Basic and Special Responsibility (SRA) Allowances

14. The Panel considered the level of Basic Allowance, currently £6,750 per Member, paid to all Councillors. They noted that last year they had recommended that the level be increased to £7,000 and that the Members had voted against this rise. The Panel were concerned that, if Members continued to vote against rises whilst the period of economic difficulties continued, it would be difficult to catch up in the future. The Panel were aware that any decision by the Council to take a recommended increase could be politically sensitive. If again the Council was unable to accept any increases, then a process should be put in place to reach the recommended levels as soon as possible.

15. Following analysis of the Members' Allowances Survey and representation from Members about comparisons with the level of allowances paid in other Authorities, the Panel went back to first principles to determine the right levels.
16. It was felt that the Basic Allowance should be set at a level which:
 - Recognises and compensates Members for a proportion of the time they spend on their duties;
 - Reflects the nature of the role Councillors play in Wokingham in representing, being responsible to, and communication with their electorate;
 - Reimburses Members for the expenses they incur in the course of normal Councillors' duties.
17. Therefore the Panel were of the opinion that the Basic Allowance should comprise two parts as standard. These were:
 - An allowance to recognise the responsibility and time involved in the role of a Councillor. From the survey, the average monthly time spent by a Member (excluding Executive Members) on their Councillor role was 53 hours. Using a working assumption that half of a Councillor's work is voluntary and using the LGA average rate for the rest, leads to an amount of £6360 pa for the Basic Allowance;
 - Compensation for out of pocket incidental expenses related to their primary role as a Councillor, not separately reimbursed under the Scheme, for which the Panel considered £500 pa was appropriate.
18. The Panel had many representations from Councillors for better support and facilities who felt they could be more productive if these could be improved. Certainly comparison against other Councils shows Wokingham in a poor light in this respect. The Panel also addressed the issue of home office and communication equipment in their considerations of the Basic Allowance.
19. The Panel had previously included an amount of £250 pa in the Basic Allowance to cover basic IT equipment. After much discussion with Members and Officers, they decided that a figure should be included that would contribute to all the facilities provided by Councillors themselves in order to perform their duties.
20. The Panel therefore decided to recommend an Allowance of £500 pa towards IT and communications equipment, consumables, and home office running costs.
21. The Panel recommended that acceptance of this component put a responsibility on Members to have an effective home office. This must include E-mail that is reviewed and used regularly and is available as a method of communication with Council Officers, colleagues and constituents.
22. Other considerations related to support and facilities which were outside the Panel's remit, but it was recommended that the accommodation and administrative support provided for Councillors at Shute End was separately reviewed with some urgency.

23. As a result, the Panel recommended that the Basic Allowance moved to **£7360 pa** comprising the following components:
- £500 for out of pocket expenses;
 - £6360 for time contributed;
 - £500 for IT, communication and home office;
24. The Panel recommended that Officers enter into negotiations with the Inland Revenue in order to establish a standard level of tax dispensation against incurred expenses claimed against the basic allowance.
25. The total Basic Allowance increase recommended would therefore be £360pa more than the recommended level last year (and £610 more than the actual level). The Panel felt this level of increase was justified, even in the current economic climate, given that £500 was to compensate for equipment and facilities often provided by other Councils to their Members. The Panel reviewed carefully the data from comparable authorities and from all Unitary Authorities. At the recommended level the Basic Allowance remained less than the average Basic Allowance in Unitaries, and below the £7,700 average of the comparison set used.
26. The Panel received representation for the consideration of a scheme to help give Members an incentive to attend training. The Panel stated that attendance at necessary training courses was a fundamental responsibility of Members and that it was reflected in the Basic Allowance. If there was a management problem with Members actually undertaking necessary training the Panel believed that this requirement should be re-enforced by the Party Leaders. Therefore no incentive scheme was recommended.
27. The benchmarking exercise the Panel initiated identified that Wokingham's SRA for the Leader of the Council was significantly lower than both the £20,260 average figure for comparable authorities and the £22,000 for Unitary Authorities. The base level of SRA had been set at £4,000 in 2001 and had not been changed since. The Panel felt that the base level of the SRA should be calculated from the Leader's SRA and therefore recommended that the level of SRA be increased from £4,000 to £5,000 which would take the Leader's Allowance to £20,000. The Panel then checked that the SRA multiples for the other positions attracting SRA's were consistent and found that benchmarking supported this increase.
28. Deputy Leader(s) of the Council:
The Panel had representation from Members about the role of Deputy Leader of the Council. The Panel was convinced that Deputy Leaders carry additional responsibility and should be differentiated from that of the Executive Members. Therefore the Panel recommended that the Deputy Leader(s) receive 2.5 x SRA.
29. Deputy Executive Members:
The Panel had requested further information about the role of the Deputy Executive Members but received nothing that altered their view that the role of a Deputy Executive Member did not carry a defined level of responsibility that warranted a SRA payment. Therefore the Panel continued to recommend that no SRA be paid to Deputy Executive Members. The Panel

did recognise that Deputy Executive Members had to attend many additional meetings and addressed this in their review of acceptable travel allowances.

30. Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Panels:
The increased importance and responsibility of Overview and Scrutiny was confirmed in many of the interviews conducted with Members. It was therefore recommended that the Management Committee Chairman receive 1 x SRA and that the three Panel Chairmen get 0.5 x SRA.
31. Members of the Planning Committee:
Although the workload of the Planning Committee had fallen during the year in line with the changes in the planning process and the decline in applications, the Panel felt that their continuing responsibility in such a high profile activity justified their existing Allowance of 0.25 x SRA.
32. Members of the Standards Committee:
The Panel received representation from the Standards Committee requesting the consideration of an allowance for the co-opted Members of the Committee. However the Panel felt that the workload and responsibility of Members was no greater than many other voluntary jobs in the public sector and therefore could not recommend an Allowance for co-opted Members other than the chairman who already receives an SRA.
33. Members with two SRA roles:
The potential issue of SRA payments to a Member who was allocated two roles attracting SRA payments was considered. It was agreed that, provided the Councillor was not a member of the Executive receiving an Executive SRA, they would be able to claim for the appropriate SRAs for each role.
34. The following SRA multiples were still considered appropriate for the roles:
- Leader of the Council – 4 x SRA;
 - Members of the Executive – 2 x SRA;
 - Chairman of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 0.5 x SRA;
 - Chairman of Planning Committee – 1 x SRA;
 - Members of the Planning Committee – 0.25 x SRA;
 - Chairman of the Licensing and Appeals Committee – 0.5 x SRA;
 - Chairman of the Standards Committee – 0.25 x SRA;
 - Chairman of the Personnel Board – 0.25 x SRA;
 - Leader of the Opposition – 1.5 x SRA;
 - Chairman of the Audit Committee – 0.5 x SRA.

The Panel recommended to the Council that:

(1) The Basic Allowance be increased to £7,360 per Member, to cover the elements listed above;

(2) The Special Responsibility Allowance be increased to £5,000;

(3) The Deputy Leader(s) of the Council be paid 2.5 x the Special Responsibility Allowance;

- (4) The Deputy Executive Members should continue to receive no Special Responsibility Allowance;***
- (5) The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee be paid 1 x the Special Responsibility Allowance;***
- (6) The Chairman of the three Overview and Scrutiny Panels be paid 0.5 x the Special Responsibility Allowance each;***
- (7) The Members of the Planning Committee should continue to receive 0.25 x the Special Responsibility Allowance;***
- (8) The Chairman of the Standards Committee continue to receive 0.25 x the Special Responsibility Allowance;***
- (9) No Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid to the co-opted Members of the Standards Committee;***
- (10) There be no changes to the multiples of Special Responsibility Allowances made to Members detailed in paragraph 34 above, as agreed by Council on 30 October 2008;***
- (11) Members below Executive level could claim for more than one SRA.***

Pensionability and Indexation

35. The Panel considered again the issue of pensionability of allowances, but saw no reason to change its previous recommendation.
36. The Panel still felt that it was better to meet annually to allow discussion and review on changes made during the year, including inflation, rather than index linking allowances without a review.

Taking all the relevant factors into account, the Panel continued to recommend to the Council that no Members be made eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme and that the allowances should not be index-linked.

Travel and subsistence allowance

37. The Panel received representations from Members about omissions from the list of duties for which they could claim a mileage allowance. This was of particular importance to Councillors whose ward and/or home was a significant distance from the Council offices. Therefore the Panel recommended that the following list of duties be added to the current list to enable Members to claim for duties that the Panel felt were fair and within the regulations:
- Attendance at any informal meeting, seminar or briefing where the Member has received an invitation to attend from the Officer calling the meeting;

- Attendance at any meeting held at the Council Offices at which Members of any party could attend if they wished e.g. Executive or Planning Committee;
- Attendance at meetings of a Committee or Panel when the Member concerned was not a member of that Committee or Panel but was attending to represent the views of their Ward on a specific report relating to that Ward;
- Any function/meeting attended by the Leader of Council, Deputy Leader(s) of Council, Leader of Opposition, Executive Member(s) or Deputy Executive Member(s) relevant to their roles in those offices, except events primarily of a social nature.

The Panel recommended to the Council that the following list of duties be added to the current list of approved duties:

- ***Attendance at any informal meeting, seminar or briefing where the Member has received an invitation to attend from the Officer calling the meeting;***
- ***Attendance at any meeting held at the Council Offices at which Members of any party could attend if they wished e.g. Executive or Planning Committee;***
- ***Attendance at meetings of a Committee or Panel when the Member concerned was not a member of that Committee or Panel but was attending to represent the views of their Ward on a specific report relating to that Ward;***
- ***Any function/meeting attended by the Leader of Council, Deputy Leader(s) of Council, Leader of Opposition, Executive Member(s) or Deputy Executive Member(s) relevant to their roles in those offices, except events primarily of a social nature.***

Childcare and Dependants Carers Allowance

38. The Panel felt that as the level of this Allowance had not been increased for a number of years, it should be increased to keep up with market rates. As a result the Panel recommended that the Allowance be increased to £6.50 per hour for a maximum of eight hours per week in line with the current policy in the Constitution.

The Panel recommended to the Council that the Allowance for Childcare and Dependant Carers be increased to £6.50 per hour, remaining for a maximum of eight hours per week.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF

THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

- (1) That the Basic Allowance be increased to £7,360 per Member;**
- (2) That the Special Responsibility Allowance be increased to £5,000;**
- (3) That the Deputy Leader(s) of the Council be paid 2.5 x the Special Responsibility Allowance;**
- (4) That the Deputy Executive Members continue to receive no Special Responsibility Allowance;**
- (5) That the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee be paid 1 x the Special Responsibility Allowance;**
- (6) That the Chairmen of the three Scrutiny Panels be paid 0.5 x the Special Responsibility Allowance each;**
- (7) That the Members of the Planning Committee continue to receive 0.25 x the Special Responsibility Allowance;**
- (8) That the Chairman of the Standards Committee continue to receive 0.25 x the Special Responsibility Allowance;**
- (9) That no Special Responsibility Allowance be paid to the co-opted Members of the Standards Committee;**
- (10) That there be no changes to the Special Responsibility Allowances made to Members detailed in paragraph 34 above, as agreed by Council on 30 October 2008;**
- (11) That Members below Executive level could claim for more than one SRA;**
- (12) That no Members be made eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme;**
- (12) That the Allowances should not be index-linked;**
- (13) That the following list of duties be added to the current list of approved duties for Travel and Subsistence Allowance purposes:**
 - Attendance at any informal meeting, seminar or briefing where the Member has received an invitation to attend from the Officer calling the meeting;**
 - Attendance at any meeting held at the Council Offices at which Members of any party could attend if they wished e.g. Executive or Planning Committee;**
 - Attendance at meetings of a Committee or Panel when the Member concerned was not a member of that Committee or Panel but was attending to represent the views of their Ward on a specific report relating to that Ward;**

- **Any function/meeting attended by the Leader of Council, Deputy Leader(s) of Council, Leader of Opposition, Executive Member(s) or Deputy Executive Member(s) relevant to their roles in those offices, except events primarily of a social nature;**

(14) That the Childcare and Dependant Carers Allowance be increased to £6.50 per hour, remaining for a maximum of eight hours per week;

(15) That the Resolutions of the Council on 29 April 2004, set out in paragraph 7 of that report, be unchanged. These are:

- **That allowances be withheld from any Member for the duration of any suspension;**
- **That, in the event of a Member being partially suspended, the allowance(s) applicable to the areas of activity from which the Member was suspended be withheld;**
- **That the allowances scheme should continue to include reference to a mechanism whereby a Member may elect to forgo any part of their entitlement to allowances under the Scheme;**
- **That, due to the likelihood of further changes in the Council's political structure, no annual index be introduced.**



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

From: Councillor
Date Elected to Council:

MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SURVEY - MARCH 2009

1 Do you currently receive a special responsibility allowance?
If so for what responsibility?

.....

2 Please give an indication of the number of hours you spend each month on your various duties as a Councillor

	Hours
a) Ward work (including phone calls, letters, visits, constituents etc)	
b) Preparation and attendance at full Council meetings	
c) Preparation and attendance at Committee meetings (see below)	

Committee	Hours
Audit Committee	
Executive	
Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
Licensing & Appeals Committee	
Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee.....	
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Please specify which Panel)	
Personnel Board	
Planning Committee.....	
Standards Committee	

d) Preparation and attendance at other Council/Committee/Working Group Meetings	
e) Any other activity (please specify)	
.....	
.....	

3 Do you consider the time you spend on Council work to be excessive?

YES

NO

Comments.....
.....
.....

4 Do you feel the current allowances scheme adequately meets the expenses you incur in performing your duties and responsibilities as a councillor?

YES

NO

Comments.....
.....
.....

5 In your time as a Councillor, have you incurred losses for which you have not been recompensed?

YES

NO

If you have answered NO, please go to Question 5

Comments.....
.....
.....

6 Was the Members Allowances Scheme a relevant consideration in deciding whether to stand for election as a Borough Councillor?

YES

NO

Comments.....
.....
.....

7 Are you aware of any instances where the Scheme has influenced prospective Councillors in their decision on whether to stand for election as a Borough Councillor?

YES

NO

Comments.....
.....
.....

8 Do you have any other comments you would like the Independent Remuneration Panel to take into consideration about this Council's current Members Allowances scheme or suggestions on how you would like to see it improved?

Comments.....
.....
.....

9 The Independent Remuneration Panel would be happy to take representations from any Councillors as part of their review. Would you like to be interviewed by the Panel?

YES

NO

10 I am employed/not employed/self employed/retired – *please delete as appropriate*

Please return the completed questionnaire by no later than Friday 20 March 2009 to:

Ella Hutchings
Democratic Services
Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1WH

Tel 0118 974 6052

Email ella.hutchings@wokingham.gov.uk

Summary of Members Allowances Survey 2009

In April 2009, the Independent Remuneration Panel undertook a short survey of Members hours and comments on their Allowances to inform their annual report on Members Allowances. Of 54 Councillors, 43 replied and percentages quoted in this summary are of the respondents. The panel felt that with an 80% response to the survey, these results were representative of the Council members.

Hours worked

On average 59 hours / month were spent as a Councillor. This splits into one third on ward work, one third on Council and committee meetings and one third on other meetings and activities. This compares, for instance, with the national average for all Councillors in England of 95 hours /month*. However for only executive members the average rises to 86 hours / month with 40% spent on Council meetings and 41% on other meetings and activities.

In the survey 84% of Councillors did not consider the time spent on Council work to be excessive although there were some comments about the difficulties of combining the role with work commitments.

Expenses

53% stated that the current scheme covered their expenses adequately but 65% felt that they had incurred losses for which they had not been recompensed. However it was clear that some Councillors were not claiming expenses to which they were entitled either through choice or not realising what could be claimed. Some felt the mileage scheme was unfair to Members who lived furthest from Shute End. This was particularly for Group Meetings which were not claimable but still necessary to do their job. There was some concern at the rising costs of the technology needed for the role and whether these were properly reflected in the Basic Allowance.

Allowances

There was a wide range of different comments on allowances (Appendix 2B). These are difficult to summarise but which the Panel read and found useful when interviewing Councillors and writing their report. There was significant feeling that Allowances, now based on responsibilities rather than activity, did not reflect the hours worked on some aspects of the role.

In particular there were several comments that Wokingham was now paying less than comparable or neighbouring Authorities.

However 93% said that the Allowance Scheme was not a relevant consideration when they stood to be a Councillor and 77% felt that this was not a consideration in people coming forward as prospective Councillors. A more important criterion was time available. 73% of Councillors are employed or self employed and this makes daytime requirements of the role more difficult.

**Independent Remuneration Panel
Wokingham Borough Council**

** National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2008*

Appendix 2A: Statistics

- *Hours worked on Council business*

Average Hours /month	<i>Non-Exec Members</i>	<i>Executive Members</i>	<i>All Members</i>
Ward	19.5	15.9	18.8
Full Council	5.4	16.6	7.5
Committee	10.8	17.7	12.1
Other Meetings	8.2	26.6	11.6
Other Activities	9.1	8.8	9.1
Total	53	85.6	59.1

- *Employment Status*

Employed: 15

Not employed: 1

Self-employed: 12

Retired: 9

Dual: 1 employed and self-employed, 2 retired but do some part time work, 1 retired and does some part time work on self-employed basis.

No Answer: 2

Appendix 2B: Comments:

NB some of the comments have been edited so that they are more concise and non attributable.

Question 3: Do you consider the time you spend on Council work to be excessive?

Comments:

- No, only sometimes if there is a lot to do.
- Unsure, it is difficult to estimate how much time it all takes – there is always something to be done!
- No, I could spend less time but I work this way – i.e. to try and do as perfect job as possible.
- It could be if I allowed it to be. There is much work to be done, but I have to prioritise full time work and family over Council work.
- No, but my wife does!
- No, but occasionally it can border on that, particularly when you also have a full time job as well.
- No, but I would spend all day every day on it if I didn't have other things to do! Because I love it!
- The job has become 24/7.
- No, full time work!
- Not all the time but the length of some meetings can be excessive.
- I find Council activity enjoyable.
- No, but I am retired and time spent on Council work is open-ended.
- No, but it can be difficult to combine with work commitments at times.
- Very time consuming with the amount of papers to read, emails/phone calls to deal with, along with residents to deal with and attending those meetings.
- No, I am retired but I can see how Councillors in employment might have difficulty.
- There is a marker split between Members who are working or retired (due to time available) and another split between the single and attached Members.
- The time taken up is productive. I wish that I had more free time.
- No, I limit the number of hours I spend on Council business due to work commitments.

- The amount of time is not excessive because that is what the job requires to do it properly. However I do believe the remuneration allocated by Wokingham is far from fair.
- No, I probably spend more than most because I have the time to do so.
- No, although it can be, but only on a few occasions per year.
- No, but some months the workload is very heavy on top of normal work commitments.
- No, level required for role.
- No – I enjoy the work initiated by being a Councillor

Question 4: Do you feel the current allowances scheme adequately meets the expenses you incur in performing your duties and responsibilities as a Councillor?

Comments:

- Meets direct costs but does not compensate for lost opportunity.
- Currently the Planning Agendas have reduced in size and so meetings and background reading do not take as long as they used to.
- I do not do it for the money.
- No, this is a tricky one to answer as it is an honour to be selected and elected as a Councillor. However, there is plenty of responsibility and the allowance is on the low side.
- Yes, but I do not claim any mileage to attend meetings of the Council, which I probably should!
- Not in it for the money but have to eat!
- Expenses – yes, responsibilities – absolutely not.
- Many meetings do not qualify for travel expenses.
- No, because one needs to attend local meetings/village parish council, also residents need visiting sometimes, and the care of ones own computer.
- Hardly. Expenses have fallen way, way below Bracknell and Reading.
- Yes, except that the role as Champion/Deputy Executive Member is not recognised by an allowance.
- The allowances are much more generous now than when I was first elected as a Councillor.

- I work for a living, with offices in my Ward and Wokingham Town. I will not therefore claim true expenses.
- Should be nearer £8,000pa, although not in the present economic climate.
- There are many trips and visits to Shute End and elsewhere that do not qualify under the rules.
- Not really as I incur lots of expense I do not claim for mainly around attending outside meetings, phone, fax, printing and all home office type work which requires broadband etc. Also dealing with residents via visits involving car use.
- Work as an Executive Deputy is building up and is proving more onerous than I expected.
- There is a very strong popular feeling not to take any expenses at present. I am happy to abide by the residents' will on this.
- It certainly covers expenses (petrol for example), but it isn't adequate remuneration for the job if you regard the job of a Councillor as an 'ordinary' job. However, there is supposed to be an element of 'voluntary work' in being a Councillor, so, all in all, the remuneration is about right.
- Not really as I could allow this to become practically a full time occupation which would be unreasonable on the allowances available.
- In addition I have had to provide my own computer, printer, and paper and ink to run it. Unlike most Councils, there is no secretarial or clerical support for Members (we write all our own letters), or any facility to do Council work at the Council offices.
- No, the Council provides no support or equipment to do my job. Other authorities give much more support. Try asking Bracknell.
- No, often take holiday to cover day meetings.
- No, I do feel the basic pay is not in line with many other Councils, where pay is higher, but the special allowance is a satisfactory method to reward the extra work.

Question 5: In your time as a Councillor, have you incurred losses for which you have not been recompensed?

Comments:

- I do not normally claim my travel allowances unless they are excessive, i.e. a long journey as opposed to home to Wokingham – my personal decision.
- I do not claim travel allowance – my choice.
- I would not claim expenses out of principal.

- Transport costs to Group meetings.
- Yes but only in the sense of not claiming my costs for fuel and running costs visiting residents, attending meetings, postage etc.
- The answer to this is 'sort of' – I do not claim travel expenses for normal meetings as I feel this is not justified – but that is my choice.
- I do not claim any mileage, but not an issue for me.
- Yes, e.g. duties and time as Deputy Executive Member.
- I claim £200/year tax allowance to cover expenses. This is always met by Inland Revenue.
- I don't claim for travel expenses, as I regard them as an integral part of the responsibility involved in a Councillor's work.
- I am fortunate in having offices in the Borough. I do not need to be a drain on Council resources. I pay all my own travelling costs.
- Yes, sometimes they are past the time to reclaim or no receipts are available.
- IT and printing costs are growing now that the Council does everything electronically.
- I don't claim nowadays, but that's my decision.
- Yes, some general expenses, but I feel that being involved is a great reward.
- Yes, but only because I have not claimed for travel etc. The amount of telephone calls can also be excessive.
- In terms of salary related to promoted posts I did not feel I could apply for, and effect on pension for the rest of my life. Impossible to quantify how much.

In terms of my current work I sometimes have to turn down work because of Council commitments.

- Yes, provision of computer, printer and costs of running these have increased due to more work/communication being dealt with in this way.
- Yes, I undertake training and attend meetings at my own expense. Most travel expense is no longer reimbursed. I pay for my own internet access, postage and telephone charges.
- No, other than petrol allowance for attendance at meetings, which I do not claim.

- Yes. I have not claimed expenses so far.
- Yes. IT equipment, print docs at home.
- No, money is not/was not the reason for standing as a candidate.

Question 6: Was the Members Allowances Scheme a relevant consideration in deciding whether to stand for election as a Borough Councillor?

Comments:

- I was not even aware there was an allowances scheme since as a Parish Councillor/Chair it is purely voluntary.
- I started before there was an allowance scheme and the only remuneration was per meeting. However, I intend to spend more time on Council work and the allowance will make a big difference to my income.
- Was not even aware of it.
- Not to date, but could be an issue soon. The differential allowance between the Executive Members and ordinary Members is too great.
- Greatly improved since first election over 12 years ago. Having said that, the workload has increased beyond recognition.
- If the allowances were more generous potential Councillors might be attracted by the financial rewards, which would perhaps encourage the wrong motives for wanting to be a Councillor.
- No, however I am aware that indirect costs put people off.
- No, but that is not a reason to make them reasonable and fair and also to look at a pension provision enjoyed by staff.
- No, when I stood I did not know that I was going to be paid.
- Since it has been the system, and since the job has grown as a Unitary Authority, it has made me think very carefully about the personal and financial cost to me of being a Councillor for Wokingham. So far I have taken this loss, but am certainly aware of what it has cost me.
- No. The money is nice for a pensioner – but was never a consideration.

Question 7: Are you aware of any instances where the Scheme has influenced prospective Councillors in their decision to stand for election as a Borough Councillor?

Comments:

- I think we need to be honest here! There are some Councillors who are here to take money for doing little (minority). There are many able people not Councillors as it's hard to balance the time aspect.
- Not to date.
- There is a dearth of good candidates coming forward for election as a Councillor. An incentive scheme is required.
- Two local prospective Parish Councillors were not interested for that reason.
- Some Councillors seem reluctant to retire and make way for younger Councillors and I believe the remuneration has been one, perhaps the only, reason for them carrying on well past retirement age.
- Yes, many people would be put off by the time commitment and cost of being a Councillor.
- No, I'm not aware.
- Yes. For younger Members they need to be compensated for work time lost.
- Yes, I was quizzed quite extensively by a prospective candidate as to the monies involved. He stood and was elected.

Question 8: Do you have any other comments you would like the Independent Remuneration Panel to take into consideration about this Council's current Members Allowances scheme or suggestions on how you would like to see it improved?

Comments:

- I reduced my main employment from 5 to 4 days per week as I could no longer manage without any free time at the weekends.
- I strongly oppose anything that moves this towards a paid position.
- Remuneration for back-benchers adequate, some Executive Members put a large amount of effort in, which is not adequately remunerated. However, as long as that is clear at the outset in taking the post that is fine.
- Scheme needs a complete and radical overhaul. There are several anomalies and inconsistencies that need addressing. Councillors are provided with inadequate resources and assistance.

- From past roles as Champion and Deputy, I feel they should be recompensed, as if you engage fully they are time consuming.
- In the Council's poor financial circumstances Councillors should not be exempt from feeling pain along with everyone else.
- Executive Members have to give much time, which has in my case become a full time job.
- Better reflect the involvement of Members who are not Executive or Committee Chairs with remuneration.
- As before, the differential between Executive and other Members.
- The mileage to various meetings etc is a mess. Requires revamping.
- There should be recognition for the time spent, especially during the day time, for Deputy Executive Members
- In the present economic climate I think it would be wrong to increase the allowances, and I would favour a modest reduction.
- You should acknowledge the existing levels are derisory. Much work is done behind the scenes, which you do not quantify.
- It is getting too officious.
- For many years WBC has had no or very small rises and they need to look outside at other Councils and compare the best with the worst.
- This is a delicate balance between compensating people for time given up, attracting a decent calibre of Councillor and avoiding corruption. The balance is currently about right.
- As a Deputy Executive Member, I believe the job should be specified in more detail. Then, and only then, there might be a case of a Special Responsibility Allowance for that position.
- Neighbours on Bracknell Forest get about twice as much as Wokingham Councillors for just about every job. Their scheme was recommended as fair and reasonable.
- If the ordinary Members Allowance isn't increased you will end up with a Council of the retired and unemployed (and probably unemployable), which is not representative of the wider community.
- As a Back Bencher I am happy with the remuneration, but I am aware others have heavy work loads.
- I think it is important that Members are properly compensated for any time spent away from their employment on Council business, but I appreciate the amount of effort that goes into ensuring most Council business takes place outside of office hours.

- IT equipment should be allowed or issued (choice).
- I would like to again suggest that when a Member takes another Member and/or an Officer in his car to a meeting, thus saving a second/third car, then the mileage allowance should be increased marginally.