

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL FROM DAVID BAKER, OBE, CHAIR,
MEMBER'S ALLOWANCES REVIEW PANEL AND COUNCILLOR FARBUS,
CHAIR, RESOURCES REVIEW PANEL**

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

(a) Recommendations of Members' Allowances Review Panel

The independent Members' Allowances Review Panel completed its review of members' allowances in November last year.

A copy of our report and recommendations was circulated to all Councillors on 18 November 2002. The report and recommendations were also circulated with the papers for the Resources Review Panel which considered the matter at its meeting on 28 November 2002. Our recommendations were arrived at following consideration of much background information, comparisons with other local authorities in Taunton Deane's "family" group and after consultation with individual Councillors and political groups.

The full details of the Panels' terms of reference, the methodology used and research undertaken to carry out the review are contained in our report.

We feel that it is important to emphasise that the basic allowance is not a full and proper recompense for the duties performed and that it does not reflect a similar level of responsibility in the private sector. It also reflects the fact that a proportion of any Councillor's work continues to be voluntary.

Our comparisons with other authorities indicates that the level of basic allowance at Taunton Deane is below the average. This, together with the knowledge of the amount of ward work now expected of a Councillor, has persuaded us to recommend an increase that more closely reflects the time Councillors spend on their public duties.

We saw no reason to make any alteration to the posts previously identified as having special responsibilities. However, we felt that we now had a far greater understanding of the responsibilities of those offices that attract special responsibility allowances. For this reason, we have recommended increases which we feel more accurately compensates Councillors for these important and time consuming duties which now form such an integral part of administering a modern local authority.

It apparent that there now seems to be little concern regarding the payment of expenses for approved duties.

The one concern drawn to our attention was the non-payment of expenses for attending political group meetings.

A great deal of discussion took place on the payment of expenses for attendance at political group meetings. The Panel continue to feel strongly that the payment of expenses for these meetings would not comply with the spirit of openness and transparency that formed such an important theme

within the local government legislation. Although we acknowledge that Group meetings might help the administration of Council meetings, we remain of the view that they are primarily used for party political purposes and should not therefore qualify as an approved duty.

Our suggested list of Approved Duties is set out in the attached Appendix.

The Panel therefore submitted the following recommendations for consideration by the Council:-

1. The existing Members' Allowance Scheme be discontinued and replaced with the following scheme with effect from 1 April 2002.

	£	£
Basic Allowance (payable to all members)	3,200	172,800
Leader	9,000	9,000
Executive Councillors (8)	3,500	28,000
Chair, Planning Committee	3,000	3,000
Chair, Review Board	3,000	3,000
Chair, Review Panels (5)	1,000	5,000
Total Annual Cost		220,800

2. Travelling and subsistence allowances shall be payable to Councillors incurred by them in the necessary carrying out of those official activities as a Councillor as appear on the list of "Approved Duties" set out in the Appendix to this report.

3. Payment for the care of Councillors' dependants to be in accordance with the following conditions:-

- (a) Councillors shall be re-imbursed, up to a specified maximum limit, for costs actually incurred in providing care for any of the following who are at the time part of the claimant's household living with him/her and who would normally be looked after by him/her, whilst the claimant is undertaking an "approved duty".

- children under the age of 14
- elderly persons (aged 60 and over)
- people with disabilities
- people with learning difficulties

- (b) In addition to living as part of the claimant's household the dependant must be unable to be left unsupervised by the carer.

- (c) The carer must not be someone who also ordinarily lives with the claimant as part of the household.

- (d) For the purposes of (a) above:-

- (i) "approved duty" would be a duty under the Council's scheme
 - (ii) The maximum hourly rate repayable would be £4.50 per hour
- (e) The claimant must produce a receipt for payments he/she has made to the carer and must sign a certificate which, amongst other things, will state that the costs were properly and necessarily incurred in the course of, or to permit, him/her undertaking his/her duties as a Councillor.

DAVID BAKER, OBE
Chair
On behalf of the Members' Allowances Review Panel

(b) Recommendations of Resources Review Panel

The Resources Review Panel, at its meeting on 28 November 2003 considered the report on the annual review of members' allowances undertaken by the Members' Allowances Review Panel.

Having considered the report, members felt that, bearing in mind the current economic climate, it might not be the time to award themselves a substantial rise in the basic allowance.

The Resources Review Panel therefore RECOMMEND that if it was accepted that the Basic Allowance for Councillors should be increased, such increase be limited to the rate of inflation or the 3.5% Local Government Staff Pay Award, whichever was the higher.

Councillor Mark Farbus

RECOMMENDED LIST OF APPROVED DUTIES

Approved duties for the payment of travelling and subsistence allowances:

- (a) meetings of the Council, the Executive, its Executive Boards, Panels, Committees, Working Parties and sub groups;
- (b) meetings of County Councils committees where the Councillor has been appointed by Taunton Deane as a member or representative;
- (c) any national conferences authorised by the Council and involving an overnight stay;
- (d) meetings of other bodies to which the Council makes appointments (representatives of the Council on outside bodies);
- (e) the following types of meetings:-
 - briefing meetings convened in The Deane House for members by an officer
 - Council organised induction/training seminars
 - agenda setting meetings
 - meetings on Council business with officers, MPs, VIPs and others holding official positions
 - Informal Council
 - civic functions (twinning ceremonies, Britain in Bloom awards, Design Awards, etc)
 - meetings of Parish Councils or Community Associations where the Councillor attends as a representative of the Council (not as a member of the Parish Council or Community Association)
 - meetings within a ward, generated by business with a constituent (any such claims to be supported by completion of a form indicating the area of the journey and the nature of the business)
 - site visits by members of the Planning Committee
- (f) such other duties approved by the Council.