

Full council 13th Dec 2021

Motion:

Following councils' previous decision to support the provision of country bikes for the town, we have had a number of site meetings and ground works will need to be carried out to enable this to happen.

I have had one quote through for just under £7000. (if agreed further quotes will be obtained)

Proposal to support the facility of bike hire in the town as per previous resolution and in order to do this, carry out ground works to be paid for from general reserves. Cost expected to be around £7000.

ITEM 9

Following the funding granted to carry out the surveys at the nature land it has become clear that controlled but more clearance will be required, beyond the scope of the small team. (see images below)

They asked if the ground team could clear some of this. I have asked for approx. estimates and based on 3 people 3 days van and potential clearance of some of the green waste (some will be used as part of the nature land) the approx. cost is around £2000-4000.

MC from finance motion to pay for this in order that the land be ready for the volunteers after the visioning day. NB we will only be charged for the amount of work required. It may come to less.



Report of the Wealden Parish Independent Remuneration Panel on Town and Parish Councillor Allowances for 2022/2023

Introduction

1. This is the report of the Parish Independent Remuneration Panel for 2022/23. The Panel is established by Wealden District Council under Regulation 27 of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, for the Town and Parish Councils in its area (full list of Town and Parish Councils to which the report applies is attached at Appendix A).

Summary

2. The Panel recommends:

- a) That allowances should be paid in accordance with three bands, Levels 1 to 3 as defined in Appendix A;
- b) That there be a 3% increase to all Basic and Chairman's Allowances rounded to the nearest pound.

2022/23	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
Basic Allowance	£175	£434	£1,384
Chairman's Allowance	£303	£682	£1,912

- c) That the policy to fix Travelling Allowances in line with HM Revenue & Customs 'Approved Mileage Allowance Payment' rates be re-affirmed;
- d) Subsistence Allowance – the following allowances for Councillors to apply:

Breakfast	£6.50	When away from home on approved Council business before 8 a.m.
Lunch	£8.50	When away from home on approved Council business between 12 noon and 2 p.m.
Evening Meal	£15.00	When away from home on approved Council business after 7 p.m.

All claims must be accompanied by a valid receipt and payment is subject to Councillors signing to say they have actually and necessarily incurred the amount being claimed.

- i. Subsistence for Overnight absence – Other than London or specified conferences - £85.
 - ii. Subsistence for Overnight absence – In London or specified conferences - £95.
- e) That the recommendations set out above are all proposed for implementation at the commencement of the financial year 2022/23. However, Town and Parish Councils can choose the extent to which they wish to implement these allowances; and
 - f) The Panel notes with regret that it is still not possible under the current legislation to recommend a Carers' Allowance for Parish/ Town Councillors, but would wish for all Parish and Town Councils to consider adopting a basic allowance to enable Parish/Town Councillors to use this to cover care costs where need be to attend meetings.

Membership of Panel and Meetings

3. The Panel consists of three members – Mr Edward Stone (Chairman), Mr Stephen Hallam and Mr Clive Mills.

4. The Panel met on Friday 5 November 2021. The Panel subsequently dealt with the preparation of this report through discussions by email.

Panel Remit

5. The Panel produces a report in relation to the members of the town and parish councils for which the Wealden District Council is the responsible authority and in respect of which it is established, making recommendations, in accordance with the provisions of regulation 29 of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 as to:
 - a) the amount of parish basic allowance payable to members of such town and parish councils;
 - b) the amount of travelling and subsistence allowance payable to members of such town and parish councils;
 - c) whether parish basic allowance should be payable only to the Mayor or Chairman of any such town and parish council or to all of its members;
 - d) whether, if parish basic allowance should be payable to both the Mayor or Chairman and the other members of any such town and parish council, the allowance payable to the Mayor or Chairman should be set at a level higher than that payable to the other members, and, if so, the higher amount so payable (Chairman's Allowance); and
 - e) the responsibilities or duties in respect of which members should receive parish travelling and subsistence allowance.

Parish Basic and Chairman's Allowances

6. As in previous years, the Panel has examined available data in order to assist in determination of a recommendation on parish/town council basic allowance and whether it should be payable to both the Mayor or Chairman and the other elected members of a town or parish council.
7. The Panel has considered last year's report to Town and Parish Councils recommending allowances for 2021/22.
8. The Clerk to the Panel had invited all Town and Parish Councillors, via the clerks, to provide any comments on the allowance scheme. Eight Parish/Town clerks responded on behalf of their council, and twelve Parish/Town Councillors responded individually. A summary is set out below:
 - The majority of Parish/Town Councils that responded had chosen not to operate a remuneration scheme.
 - The Basic Allowance is sufficient, and the Chairman's Allowance and Travelling and Subsistence Allowances are appropriate.
 - The allowance should cover costs for things like caring for dependents, travel, etc.
 - The Basic Allowance should be enough to attract a wide range of people, particularly those of working age.
 - Co-opted Councillors should qualify for the same allowances as elected colleagues.
 - It was felt important to keep the scheme and that it should be made known when advertising vacancies to encourage more financially challenged individuals to feel included in the application process.
 - The difference in allowance between a Level 1 and a Level 3 council is vast and perhaps this should be looked at, regardless of precept or council size, as the work and councillor input is not as disproportionate as the pay is suggesting.
 - The Members' allowance should have no bearing on the decision to stand as councillor - the reasons are to represent and to support the parish.

- Most communication these days is carried out via email rather than post so there is no expense incurred. Most people these days have a mobile phone contract that covers everyday phone calls, therefore expenses should be the exception rather than the rule (i.e for Councillors who do not have an internet connection or a suitable mobile phone contract).
 - Councillors have to pay for phone and broadband anyway so there are almost no expenses incurred. The travel allowances are sufficient.
 - With regard to the subsistence allowance, Councillors should take a packed lunch with them wherever possible.
 - Expenses aren't justified and there shouldn't be any increase in the current year.
 - The current allowance is not sufficient to cover expenses and councillors in some situations would need to subsidise expenditure from their income (e.g pension), particularly if Councillors are expected to serve on more than one committee.
 - The basic allowance does not reimburse for the cost of carrying out this role, thus deterring those who may have the experience and expertise for the job.
 - At a time of severe pay restraint for public sector employees, and the hardships faced by many working people following the protracted disruption to many working lives as a result of the pandemic, increasing any of the allowances paid to Councillors would be inappropriate.
9. In response to the feedback, the Panel felt that it was important to remind all Councillors that this was an **Allowance Scheme**, not a salary, and therefore not intended to compensate the number of hours worked, nor reimburse for the effort they put in.
 10. The Panel is aware that it is common practice to co-opt Parish Councillors to vacancies and acknowledged the responses to the survey that allowances should be given to co-opted members, but confirmed that this was not allowed under the Regulations.
 11. In addition, the comments received about the absence of a Cares' Allowance were noted by the Panel. The Panel reiterated that, under the current regulations, no such allowance was payable. However the Panel acknowledged that an anomaly did exist with respect to Town and Parish Councils but it was outside their terms of reference to adjust this. This was a matter for the Town and Parish Councils to address themselves.
 12. The Panel emphasised that it is keen to see all Parish and Town Councils adopt a scheme of some sort, even if it is normal practice not to claim. This is to ensure that no potential candidate should be put off standing due to the costs of working as a local councillor, and to ensure that Parish and Town Councillors could choose to claim an allowance should they need to do so.
 13. With regard to the comment about the vast difference between the Basic Allowance for a Level 1 and Level 3 council, the Panel confirmed that the size of the council determined the allowance; however parish/town councils could make their own decisions based on their precept.
 14. Following discussion, the Panel **recommends** that a 3% increase in all the basic allowances for levels 1-3 is appropriate, rounded to the nearest £1. This is in line with the Panel's recommendations for Wealden District Council.
 15. Regulation 29(2) requires that recommendations be expressed not only in cash terms but also as a percentage of the amount recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel as the Basic Allowance for Wealden District Councillors. The Panel is recommending that the allowance is increased for District Councillors to £4,870 per annum for the financial year 2022/23. Based on that figure, the percentages have been incorporated into the attached Appendix A.

Chairman's Allowance

16. As indicated in previous reports, individual Town and Parish Councils are free to decide whether an allowance should be payable only to the Mayor or Chairman and/or

to all of its members. The Chairman's Allowance, as recommended by this report, is intended to be paid as a substitute for the Basic Allowance rather than in addition to it, but this is at the discretion of each Town and Parish Council.

17. Town and Parish Councils are reminded that the Chairman's Allowance (again detailed in the attached Appendix A) is an allowance personal to the Parish/Town Councillor elected Mayor or Chairman. It is entirely separate to the allowance under the Local Government Act 1972, Sections 15(5) and 35(5), which is payable as the Parish/Town Council thinks fit to reasonably meet the expenses of the office of Mayor or Chairman.
18. The Panel **recommends** an increase to all Chairman's Allowances in Levels 1 to 3 on the same basis as increases to Parish/Town Council Basic Allowances, as detailed in Appendix A attached.

Travelling Allowance

19. The Panel wanted to clarify that under Regulation 26, Town and Parish Councils may pay travelling and subsistence allowances, including an allowance in respect of travel by bicycle or by any other non-motorised form of transport, undertaken or incurred in connection with the performance of any duty within one or more of the categories set out in that Regulation. This also includes provision for encouraging car sharing.
20. Councillors can receive up to a tax-free approved amount when using their own vehicles in carrying out their duties. These payments are known as Approved Mileage Allowance Payments (**AMAP**), and as from 6 April 2011 the following rules apply:

Car or Van – 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25p per mile thereafter;

Motor Cycle – 24p per mile (all miles);

Cycle – 20p per mile (all miles); and

A 5 pence per mile per passenger supplement for up to four passengers.

21. The Panel confirmed that the Travelling Allowance was in accordance with the official rates published by HM Revenue and Customs and used by the majority of other councils. It was noted that anything paid above this amount would be subject to taxation and would require tax forms to be completed
22. The Panel recommends that travelling allowances continue to be paid in line with the HM Revenue & Customs 'Approved Mileage Allowances Payments' (AMAP). The Panel observed that there was no mention of claims for other travel costs within the Allowance Scheme, such as public transport and taxis. It was suggested that this category be included and reimbursed in full, subject to the Council's approval.
23. The Panel **recommends** that the policy to fix Travelling Allowances in line with AMAP be re-affirmed.

Subsistence Allowance

24. The Panel **recommends** that the current level of subsistence rates for 2022/23 be amended to increase the evening meal allowance and remove the reference to a tea allowance, as follows:

Breakfast	£6.50	When away from home on approved Parish/ Town Council business before 8 am.
Lunch	£8.50	When away from home on approved Parish/ Town Council business between 12 noon and 2 pm.
Evening Meal	£15.00	When away from home on approved Parish/ Town Council business after 7 pm.

In addition, subsistence for overnight absence other than London or specified conferences should remain at £85, and for London or specified conferences should be £95.00.

25. It was confirmed that payment should still be subject to Parish/ Town Councillors certifying that they had actually and necessarily incurred the amount being claimed. The Panel commented that subsistence allowance was a 'top up' on the amount it would cost a councillor to eat at home.

Co-opted Members

26. As set out above, under the relevant legislation co-opted members of Town and Parish Councils are not eligible to be paid Parish/Town Council Basic Allowances nor Chairman's Allowances, but may claim Travelling and Subsistence Allowances. It is not in the Panel's remit to make any recommendations that this change.

Communication of Allowances

27. On receipt of this report, Town and Parish Councils must advertise receipt of the report in line with Regulation 30 (2003 Regulations).
28. In setting the levels of allowances, Town and Parish Councils must show they have regard to the IRP's recommendations, but it is entirely up to each Town and Parish Council what scheme of allowances is adopted. The Panel has expressed its preference that an allowance scheme is adopted by all Councils, even if not claimed by individual Councillors. When adopting a scheme, Parish and Town Councils must under the Regulations publish its scheme by public notice.

Other Business

29. The Panel did not consider that it was appropriate to make a recommendation for more than one year.
30. The Panel would like to express its thanks to the Parish and Town Councils and Officers who had assisted it in its work and the preparation of this report.

Edward Stone
Chairman

Dated: 15 November 2021

	LEVEL1	LEVEL2	LEVEL3	
Basic Allowance	£175	£434	£1,384	
Chairman's Allowance	£ 303	£682	£ 1,912	
PARISH	No. of Cllrs	Maximum Basic Allowance	Maximum Chairman's Allowance	% of Recommended District Basic Allowance
<u>Level 1</u>				
Alciston	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Little Horsted	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Selmeston	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cuckmere Valley	7	£175	£303	3.59%
Berwick	7	£175	£303	3.59%
Wartling	7	£175	£303	3.59%
Long Man	7	£175	£303	3.59%
Hooe	7	£175	£303	3.59%
Arlington	7	£175	£303	3.59%
Laughton	7	£175	£303	3.59%
Isfield	7	£175	£303	3.59%
Chiddingly	9	£175	£303	3.59%
Hellingly	15	£175	£303	3.59%
Hadlow Down	7	£175	£303	3.59%
Fletching	9	£175	£303	3.59%
Warbleton	11	£175	£303	3.59%
Frant	11	£175	£303	3.59%
Alfriston	7	£175	£303	3.59%
East Hoathly/Halland	9	£175	£303	3.59%
Chalvington/Ripe	7	£175	£303	3.59%
Horam	11	£175	£303	3.59%
East Dean/Friston	9	£175	£303	3.59%
Framfield	11	£175	£303	3.59%
Hartfield	13	£175	£303	3.59%
Ninfield	9	£175	£303	3.59%
Danehill	9	£175	£303	3.59%
Buxted	15	£175	£303	3.59%
Withyham	13	£175	£303	3.59%
Herstmonceux	11	£175	£303	3.59%
Mayfield/ Five Ashes	15	£175	£303	3.59%
Maresfield	14	£175	£303	3.59%
Rotherfield	13	£175	£303	3.59%
Westham	13	£175	£303	3.59%
Pevensey	13	£175	£303	3.59%
Wadhurst	15	£175	£303	3.59%
<u>Level 2</u>				
Forest Row	15	£434	£682	8.91%

Willingdon/Jevington	19	£434	£682	8.91%
Polegate	15	£434	£682	8.91%
Heathfield/Waldron	21	£434	£682	8.91%
<u>Level 3</u>				
Hailsham	24	£1,384	£1,912	28.42%
Uckfield	15	£1,384	£1,912	28.42%
Crowborough	16	£1,384	£1,912	28.42%