

Swindon Independent Parish Remuneration Panel

Recommendations for Parish and Town Councils in the Borough of Swindon in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003

Introduction

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 state that:

- Parish councils may choose to pay their members an allowance, known as 'parish basic allowance', to recognise the time and effort they put in to their parish duties.
- Each parish council may make an allowance available to its Chair only, or to each of its members.
- Where all members receive an allowance, the amount payable to the chair may be different to that paid to other members, but otherwise the amount paid to each member must be the same.
- Parish basic allowance is a discretionary allowance. It may be paid in a lump sum, or at intervals throughout the year.

A parish or town council may also pay its members allowances in respect of travel and subsistence. They may be paid in respect of travel and subsistence both inside and outside the boundary of the parish. Allowances for travel may include allowances for travel by non-motorised transport, such as a bicycle.

There is no obligation on parish and town councils to pay such allowances. However, if a parish or town council wishes to pay such allowances, it should have regard to the recommendations from the Parish Remuneration Panel. In respect of the parish basic allowance, a remuneration panel may make a single recommendation applying to all the parishes within that area, or it can make individual recommendations for each parish or town council.

The Borough Council has appointed an Independent Remuneration Panel, which currently has the following membership: Mr John Dernie (Chair)(Business Sector Representative), Ms Michelle Howard (Voluntary / Community Sector Representative), Mr Graham Cardwell (Lay Member), Mr Frank Stobrawe (Lay Member) and Ms Julie Card (Lay Member). This Panel reviews the issues of allowances for parish and town councils within Swindon.

The Panel has determined that it will use a formula (based on a percentage of the Borough Council's Basic Allowance and electorate populations) to create a single recommendation in the form of a scale of allowances that can be applied to all parish

and town councils in the Borough. This scale is linked to any increase in Borough Council allowances which avoids the necessity of undertaking a review of parish allowances when the Borough Council's levels of remuneration change.

The Panel last reviewed this formula at its meeting on 25th April 2024 in order to ensure its continuing relevance and appropriateness. It concluded that the Panel's previously adopted recommendations for parish and town council allowances be endorsed.

Basic and Chairs' Allowances

In creating the formula used for determining parish allowances, the Panel agreed that there is a relationship between the size of the parish electorate and the remuneration that would be justified. This is because a larger authority has the potential to operate more services, which in turn leads to a greater work load for those parish councillors.

The Panel also agreed that the size of the parish electorates should be banded within categories (rather than using the exact size of each parish) and that the parish basic allowance and any chair's allowance should be related to the current values of the Basic Allowance (BA) paid by the Borough Council to its members as well as the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) paid to the Leader of the Council (currently X3 the BA).

The Panel has determined that:

- A separate allowance should be recommended for the Chairs of parish and town councils, but that no recommendation be made regarding payments to Vice-Chairs or Chairs of parish committees.
- Each category banding of parish electorates will have a % of the Borough Council's Basic Allowance assigned to it to calculate the recommendation for the parish councillor allowance.
- Each category banding of parish electorates will have a % of the Borough Council's Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the Leader of Swindon Borough Council / Chair of Cabinet assigned to it to calculate the recommendation for the parish chair allowance. The Panel has further determined that the current multiplier used to calculate the Parish Council Chair Allowance be reduced from X3 to X2 the BA, in recognition that work at the parish level is more equally shared, and that parish chairs are not required to operate in as prominent a leadership role as the Leader of Swindon Borough Council.
- All allowances being recommended to parish and town councils be linked to the current Scheme of Councillor Allowances adopted by Swindon Borough

Council. The Council has agreed a 5.58% increase to its Members Allowances as from May 2024.

Recommendations for the 2025 - 2026 Municipal Year

The following recommendations have been calculated using the Swindon Borough Council Scheme of Councillors Allowances for 2025-2026 as follows:

- Basic Allowance = £9,439.56 for calculating the Parish Councillor Allowance.
- Basic Allowance multiplied by 2 = £18,879.12 for calculating the Parish Chair Allowance.

Parish	Electors (Nov 2024)	Parish Electorate Band	% of SBC Allowance per band	Parish Cllr Allowance £	Parish Chair Allowance £
Bishopstone	539	0 – 2,499	2.5%	236	472
Blunsdon	2,426	0 – 2,499	2.5%	236	472
Castle Eaton	208	0 – 2,499	2.5%	236	472
Central Swindon North	25,739	25,000-27,499	27.5%	£2,596	£5,192
Central Swindon South	44,238	42,500-44,999	45%	£4,248	£8,496
Chiseldon	1,993	0 – 2,499	2.5%	£236	£472
Covingham	3,212	2,500–4,999	5%	£472	£944
Hannington	202	0 – 2,499	2.5%	£236	£472
Haydon Wick	17,936	17,500–19,999	20%	£1,888	£3,776
Highworth	6,562	5,000–7,499	7.5%	£708	£1,416
Liddington	550	0 – 2,499	2.5%	£236	£472
Nythe, Eldene & Liden	8,220	7,500–9,999	10%	£944	£1,888
South Marston	799	0 – 2,499	2.5%	£236	£472
St Andrews	13,143	12,500-14,999	15%	£1,416	£2,832
Stanton Fitzwarren	159	0 – 2,499	2.5%	£236	£472

Parish	Electors (Nov 2024)	Parish Electorate Band	% of SBC Allowance per band	Parish Cllr Allowance £	Parish Chair Allowance £
Stratton St Margaret	16,584	15,000–17,499	17.5%	£1,652	£3,304
Wanborough	1,688	0 – 2,499	2.5%	£236	£472
West Swindon	19,460	17,500-19,999	20%	£1,888	£3,776
Wroughton	7,247	5,000–7,499	7.5%	£708	£1,416

Other Allowances

The Panel has also made recommendations to parish and town councils on the level of travel and subsistence allowances as set out below.

Travel

The rate for the use of a private car shall not exceed 45p per mile (Inland Revenue Tax Threshold).

The rate for motorcycles shall not exceed 16.5p per mile.

The rate for pedal cycles shall not exceed 30p per mile.

The rate for travel by taxi shall not exceed:

- (a) in cases where no public transport is reasonably available, the amount of the actual fare and any reasonable gratuity (tip) paid; and
- (b) in any other case, the amount of the fare for travel by appropriate public transport.

Passengers

The rate for the use of a private car above may be increased for the "carriage of each passenger (not exceeding 4) to whom a travelling allowance would otherwise be payable". A rate of not more than 3 pence a mile for the first passenger and 2 pence per mile for the second and subsequent passengers may be claimed.

Bus fares, train fares, ferry fares, tolls, and parking fees will be reimbursed at actual cost.

The rate of travel by a "hired vehicle" other than a taxi shall not exceed the rate that would apply had the vehicle belonged to the Councillor / Co-opted Member who hired it.

Rail Travel

Standard Class rail fare or ordinary fare for other public conveyance, or the appropriate cheap or economy rate where applicable shall apply in all cases.

Standard Class rail travel should always be used unless the train's Standard Class accommodation is full, in which case it is in order to travel First Class and pay the surcharge.

Subsistence Allowances

Subsistence allowance claims must only be made where actual expenditure has been incurred. All appropriate receipts in support of subsistence claims must be provided and reimbursement will only be made up to the maximum levels set out below:

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|-------|---|--------|
| (i) | Breakfast allowance (more than 4 hours away from normal place of residence) start before 7 a.m. | £5.85 |
| (ii) | Lunch allowance (more than 4 hours away from normal place of residence, including the lunchtime between 12 noon and 2 p.m.) | £8.05 |
| (iii) | Evening meal allowance (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence ending after 7 p.m.) | £15.20 |

In the case of absence that covers more than one Subsistence period then councillors are permitted to combine these to form one Subsistence claim.

Meals on Trains

When main meals (that is breakfast, lunch or dinner) are taken on trains during a period for which there is an entitlement to subsistence allowance, the reasonable cost of the meals (including VAT), may be reimbursed in full. Where the cost of meals taken on trains is reimbursed, absence from the normal place of residence must be consistent with the absences listed above.

Claims must not be made where any meal is provided free of charge by an authority or outside body and only where actual expenditure has been incurred. Claims for subsistence and car parking etc. should be accompanied wherever possible by receipts.

Travel and subsistence allowances may only be paid for travel and subsistence in respect of:

- a meeting of the authority
- a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of the authority
- a meeting of some other body to which the authority make appointments or nominations

- a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of a body to which the authority make appointments or nominations
- duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in pursuance of any standing order requiring a member or members to be present while tender documents are opened
- a meeting of a local authority association of which the authority is a member
- duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in connection with the discharge of any function of the authority conferred by or under any enactment and empowering or requiring the authority to inspect or authorise the inspection of premises
- any other duty approved by the authority in connection with discharging the duties of the authority or its committees or sub-committees

General Issues

The Panel wishes to draw the attention of all parish and town councils to the following issues:

Withdrawal of Allowances

A parish or town council may make provisions so that where a councillor is suspended or partially suspended from their duties, all or part of any allowances can be withheld. They may also provide that any allowances already paid in respect of a period for which a member has been suspended must be repaid.

Forgoing Allowances

A parish or town councillor may choose not to receive all or part of any allowance to which they would otherwise be entitled. To do so they must give written notice to the proper officer of the parish council.

Financial Loss Allowance

The 2003 Regulations remove the option of authorities to allow parish and town councillors a financial loss allowance under Section 173 of the Local Government Act 1972. Parish and town councillors can instead be paid the parish basic allowance and travel and subsistence allowances to remunerate them for their duties on the council.

Publicity

When a parish or town council intending to pay allowances receives recommendations from the Panel it must ensure copies of the report are available for inspection and publicise a notice in a conspicuous place in the parish for 14 days stating:

- That it has received recommendations from the Panel

- Describes the main features of recommendations and amounts
- States that copies of the Panel's report are available for inspection

A copy of the Panel's report shall be made available by the parish or town council to anyone who asks for one and pays a reasonable fee as the council may determine.

Records of Allowances

Parish and town councils are required to maintain a record of the allowances paid and make a record available for inspection with reasonable notice. The record must specify the name of the councillor concerned and the amount paid to them. A copy of the record must be made available on request and at the end of each year the amounts paid to each councillor shall be publicised in a conspicuous place in the area for 14 days.