

REVIEW OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES

Independent Remuneration Panel

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1.0 **Background**

- 1.1 The Panel first reported in March 2000 and have reported every year since then, including May 2003 when the first major review was undertaken. Most of the Panel's recommendations have been implemented. During 2015, the Panel decided that a second major review of the scheme was required and again in 2018, when a third large scale review was undertaken.
- 1.2 The last few years have seen an unprecedented period of austerity, restrictions and budget restraints in Local Government spending which has impacted on both staff wages and consequently Members allowances. The Panel have kept a close brief on national issues, budgets, policy directions, consultations, the impact of COVID-19 on Councillor work and also the local landscape including allowances schemes and the actions of other Local Authorities.
- 1.3 The last report of the Panel (February 2021) commented on and recommended the following:

8.1 The Panel has concluded that the structure of the Allowance Scheme for Devon is fit for purpose and based on sound principles.

8.2 The Panel has conducted a wide-ranging review, taking into account the usual benchmarking data, organisational structures, view of other Authorities, workloads of Councillors and the most recently conducted census survey, the views of Members and other relevant factors.

8.3 Up until 2017, the Panel had consistently recommended increases in the Basic Allowance, with corresponding increases in the level of SRAs and the recommendations had not been implemented, hence the level of allowances in Devon had fallen behind. The Panel were pleased that in 2018, 2019 and 2020, the Council listened to their recommendations and their strong evidence base to increase the Basic Allowance.

8.4 Taking into account the evidence available and for the reasons set out above, the panel recommends that:

- (a) The basic structure of the current scheme is endorsed and retained;*
- (b) The Panel feels it important not to depart from the panel's established formula of calculating the basic allowance and also notes the uncertainty of the staff pay award for 2021/2022. In that vein and recognising the likely pay freeze (although subject to consideration by Local Government Employers) for those earning in excess of £24,000 and the base line figure of £27,456 used for calculating the basic allowance (median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in Devon), the Panel recommend that allowances be frozen for 2021/2022 (See Appendix 1 for the current rates recommended to be carried through to 2021/2022);*

- (c) *that the overnight rate for London be increased to £153.00, in line with the rates calculated by Price Waterhouse Cooper for the average daily rate (ADR) for London.*
- (d) *Careful consideration should be given, in the future, to the levels of allowances to ensure they keep pace with the economy generally;*
- (e) *The sustained reduction in the number of SRA's be welcomed and that the levels be kept below the 50% threshold, as is currently the case;*
- (f) *That the Panel reiterate their desire that Group Leaders take a robust approach to the performance management of their Members and places on record their thanks for the levels of reassurance provided by Group Leaders for dealing with performance issues; and*
- (g) *Notwithstanding the recommendations of the Panel for an allowances freeze, the Panel wish to place on record their appreciation to Councillors for their Leadership throughout the pandemic, noting that Members had worked tirelessly in their communities and also adapted to remote working practices to ensure democratic processes continued.*

1.4 The Procedures Committee on the 2 February 2021 welcomed the Report of the Independent Panel and thanked its Members for their work and asked the County Council to accept the recommendations outlined below.

- (a) that the Report of the Independent Panel be welcomed and its Members be thanked for their work;
- (b) that the Committee notes the Report's conclusions and asks the County Council to accept the recommendations outlined below.
 - (a) The basic structure of the current scheme is endorsed and retained;
 - (b) The Panel feels it important not to depart from the panel's established formula of calculating the basic allowance and also notes the uncertainty of the staff pay award for 2021/2022. In that vein and recognising the likely pay freeze (although subject to consideration by Local Government Employers) for those earning in excess of £24,000 and the base line figure of £27,456 used for calculating the basic allowance (median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in Devon), the Panel recommend that allowances be frozen for 2021/2022 (See Appendix 1 for the current rates recommended to be carried through to 2021/2022);
 - (c) that the overnight rate for London be increased to £153.00, in line with the rates calculated by Price Waterhouse Cooper for the average daily rate (ADR) for London.
 - (d) Careful consideration should be given, in the future, to the levels of allowances to ensure they keep pace with the economy generally;

(e) The sustained reduction in the number of SRA's be welcomed and that the levels be kept below the 50% threshold, as is currently the case;

(f) That the Panel reiterate their desire that Group Leaders take a robust approach to the performance management of their Members and places on record their thanks for the levels of reassurance provided by Group Leaders for dealing with performance issues; and

(g) Notwithstanding the recommendations of the Panel for an allowances freeze, the Panel wish to place on record their appreciation to Councillors for their Leadership throughout the pandemic, noting that Members had worked tirelessly in their communities and also adapted to remote working practices to ensure democratic processes continued.

1.5 The composition of the Panel is:

Heather Morgan – (Chair) Tribunal Judge (since 2002)

Bryony Houlden – Chief Executive of South West Councils (since 2015)

Steve Barriball – Chief Executive of Citizens Advice, Exeter (since 2017)

1.6 The Panel's appointments are until May 2025, having been re-appointed in 2021 through the Annual meeting of the Council.

1.7 The prime role of the Panel has been to assess the allowances for being an elected Councillor, representing the diverse communities that make up Devon now and into the future. The Panel's contribution has been to ensure that Councillors have the financial recognition to fulfil some of the most demanding roles that exist in public life.

1.8 In preparation for this years report, the Chair has maintained regular contact with the Council, regularly meeting both the IRP advising officer and then the Leader of the Council (on 30 September 2021) to obtain feedback on the 2021 Panel Report, kept abreast of events and changes affecting the Council such as Budgets and the Council's budget position, any Staff Pay Award news, the impact of COVID 19, Local Elections, and any national movement towards Local Government Reorganisation.

1.9 The Panel met remotely on the 31 August and 16 November (meeting with Political Group Leaders on this day) and 14 December 2021, to consider events since the last Panel report, the national context (for example, budgetary issues and COVID-19), the current scheme, comparisons with other authorities, benchmarking data (South West Council's and National Census data) and potential recommendations and content for the final report.

1.10 The Panel agreed their timetable for the review at their first meeting and this is outlined below.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Notes</u>
31 Aug 2021 @ 9am	Panel meeting	Teams
30 September 2021	Panel Chair to meet Leader of the Council	In Person
16 November 2021 (on rising of Procedures)	Panel meeting with Group Leaders followed by Panel Meeting	Virtual Meeting
November / December 2021	Draft final report	Karen Strahan / Steph Lewis
14 December 2021	Panel Meeting to consider draft of final report	Virtual Meeting
Early January 2022	Finalise report based on panel comments	Karen Strahan / Steph Lewis (comments via email)
28 th January 2022	Final Report to be ready for dispatch with Procedures papers	
8 th February 2022 @ 10.30am	Procedures Committee	
17 February 2022	Council meeting	Consideration of Panel recommendations alongside the budget for 2022/2023

2.0 Events Since the Panel's Last Report

- 2.1 The biggest change since the previous report are the Devon County Council Elections held in May 2021. These did not result in any change of political administration; however, there was a decrease in the Conservative majority (from 42 to 39), an increase in Liberal Democrat Members (7 to 9) and an additional Green Member. There were 21 new Councillors, 17 Members had stood down and 4 were not re-elected. There have been no changes to the Committee structure and therefore no impact on allowances. The number of Cabinet Members was reinstated to 9 after the Leader had previously taken the Finance Portfolio on a temporary basis after the Cabinet Member became Chairman of the Council last year.
- 2.2 COVID-19 continued to impact on the working practices for both the Council and of course Councillors. In the early days of the pandemic, a fast-moving and unprecedented situation, Councillors' had a significant role in supporting communities, as well as delivering normal services. Their role as civic and community leaders required visible, responsible leadership that linked community-led support with council structures to help build and sustain overall resilience.
- 2.3 Following the first wave of the pandemic, Councillors were also active in leading and supporting communities as they moved through the process of ending the lockdown and looking ahead as a new form of normality was starting to restore. It is clear that the position is constantly changing and Councillors are expected to respond and be flexible to communities needs.
- 2.4 Central Government had put in place a number of grant funding streams to help support Local Authorities with Covid-19. The confirmed additional funding Devon County Council was expecting to receive directly this financial year was currently £36.6 million, in addition to the £25.6 million carried forward from 2020/21. Further detail can be seen in the most recent [budget monitoring report](#).
- 2.5 In terms of Local Authority budgets and the settlement for 2022/2023, the Government presented the Spending Review to the House of Commons on the 27th October and sees a return to a multi-year Spending Review and covers the three years from 2022/23 to 2024/25. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was due in December and would also cover three years. Whilst the Spending Review provided some headline investment figures there was no indication of the formula that would be used to distribute funds to Local Authorities.
- 2.6 The main points from the Chancellor's Budget Statement that were relevant to Local Government included matters such as the council tax referendum limit, social care precept, business rates multiplier, conclusion of the review of business rates, hospitality and leisure relief, youth services funding as part of the levelling up agenda, new funding for community football pitches, support for museums and libraries and new 'pocket parks' on small areas of derelict land. The public sector pay freeze would not continue, and the minimum wage had been increased.

- 2.6 Within the Council, there are still significant pressures in areas of social care (both children and adults) and the most recent budget monitoring reports (month 6) show this to be the case with Adult Care and Health Services who are forecast to overspend by £5.2 million and Children's Services by £7.3 millions. This figure does not include the projected funding shortfall of £36 millions on Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). In line with government guidance for 2021/22, the Council is holding the SEND funding shortfall on the balance sheet as a negative reserve. At the end of 2020/21 the DSG reported a cumulative deficit of £48.9 million which was carried forward as a deficit reserve as per government guidance. When combined with the current year forecast the deficit is expected to be £84.9 million by the end of 2021/22.
- 2.7 Over the last several years, the Council's workforce has significantly reduced with reductions of over 3000 staff (excluding schools) with various vacancy management processes (undertaken in 2010/2011), which recommenced in 2014 and then a recruitment freeze for part of 2017. Even now, increases to staff head counts have to undergo a rigorous approval process. The impact of COVID-19 on Council budgets may also have an impact on staffing over the coming months.
- 2.8 The Council's main concern has always been continued help and support for the most vulnerable people and families in communities. This has been even more crucial over the last 18 months and the Council continues to support Devon's residents in a number of ways, for example, providing small emergency grants to people in financial hardship as a result of COVID-19, detailed webpages signposting to available support <https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/support-for-people-and-families/> for example, hardship funds, Government assistance, job opportunities, business support and grants, food support and free school means etc.
- 2.9 In terms of pay award, there was a staff pay freeze from 2009/10 up until 2012/2013. In 2013/2014 there was a 1% pay increase for 'public service' staff but there was no pay award for Chief Officers. For 2014 – 2016 there was a complex pay offer which amounted to 2.2% for most staff over a two-year period. Those at the lower spinal column point (SCP) were awarded higher percentage rises. The pay award for 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 were for staff with salaries starting at £17,714 per annum to get a 1% increase in both 2016/17 and 2017/18. Those earning less than this would receive higher increases to take account of the new National Living Wage. The pay award for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 was a two-year deal at 2% per year for both the staff and Chief Officers. For 2020/21 the staff pay award was 2.75% with an extra days leave for those with less than 5 years service (from 20 to 21 days).
- 2.10 The position for 2021 is still currently unknown, and as of October 2021, all three recognised Trade Unions had rejected the National Employers' final pay offer and have moved to balloting their members regarding Industrial Action; it is anticipated that the results of all three ballots will be known by mid-February 2022. The Chancellor's statement on the 27 October 2021 indicated that the

public sector pay freeze would not continue, and the intention was to return to the usual system of independent pay commission recommendations for 'fair and affordable' pay rises over the whole Spending Review period. The minimum wage will be increased from £8.91 to £9.50 per hour, accepting the Low Pay Commission's recommendation.

- 2.11 The Panel also noted that on a national level, MP's received a 3.1% pay rise from April 2020 (no rise in 2021), taking their salary to £81,932 (from £79,468). The rise follows a 2.7% rise in 2019, a 1.8% in 2018, 1.4% in 2017, 1.3% in 2016 and a large increase, from £67,000 to £74,000, in 2015. Annual changes in MPs' pay are linked to changes in average earnings in the public sector using Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures. This is in line with the decision by IPSA in 2015 to adjust MPs' pay at the same rate as changes in public sector earnings published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). This was confirmed in July 2018 following a further review of MPs' pay.
- 2.12 The Panel were previously concerned that the levels of allowances had become 'too far removed' from the figures originally proposed back in 2009 when allowances were frozen. The Panel kept a record of allowance rates and what the allowances would have been if the mean wage increases (up to 2010) and staff increases (from 2010 to the current day) had been applied. The Panel were therefore pleased that the Council accepted their recommendations from the last three reviews.
- 2.13 The current figure in relation to the percentage of Members receiving an SRA payment has increased to 43% (up from 41.5% the previous year) following the Elections in May 2021, when the Leader reinstated the Finance Portfolio Cabinet Member.

3.0 Meeting with Group Leaders (16 November 2021)

- 3.1 The Panel have always felt it important to obtain the feedback from Group Leaders on the current scheme and of any issues which might impact on allowances and, as such, a meeting was arranged for 16 November 2021.
- 3.2 The Panel discussed last year's recommendations, obtained feedback on the current scheme and other issues such as Elections, budgets and COVID-19.
- 3.3 The discussions with Group Leaders highlighted the successful running of the Elections campaign during the pandemic and all the mitigating factors that had been put in place. They noted that running the Induction sessions online, which were recorded, allowed new Members to participate and those that were unable to attend due to work or family commitments, could watch back the recording at a more convenient time. For some of the new Members, it was difficult to know what to expect in terms of workloads, as these had seemingly increased during the pandemic and higher caseloads had become the new norm.
- 3.4 It was noted that members of the public were now using a wider range of mediums to contact Councillors, increasing demand and workloads, and the

use of social media had become more prolific and difficult for Members to manage effectively. This was compounded for those Members that were also dual hatters as district Councillors. The Panel noted that casework management tips and training could be useful for all Councillors.

- 3.5 Concerns were also raised around attracting a diverse range of councillors, to include more women and young people, and the Panel and Group Leaders discussed the need to maintain a competitive allowance to achieve this. Concerns had also been raised around Councillor safety, the requirement to have personal details listed on the Council's website, and the increased level of hostility faced by Councillors from members of the public; this in turn had put more of a strain on both new and returning Councillors during the pandemic. This had been a concern raised by both councillors and MPs across the country over the past two years. The Panel noted the requirements of the Localism Act in terms of the publication of addresses but welcomed the assurance that action would be, and has been previously, taken should a councillor's safety be at risk, including the removal of home address from the website.
- 3.6 These concerns around increased workloads and the ability to attract younger and more diverse councillors, were also the main themes highlighted by Councillors when asked to comment on their views around the Council's allowances scheme and ways to improve it.
- 3.7 With ongoing issues around COVID-19 and Brexit, the Local Government Re-organisation issue continued to be on a back burner with only a small number of Local Authorities going forward, including Somerset.
- 3.8 Group Leaders confirmed that the current scheme of allowances was fit for purpose but looked to the future in terms of 2022 and beyond. It was noted that negotiations for the staff 2021/2022 pay award had not been reached and that the role of a Councillor had become more challenging in recent times from austerity through to the pandemic. Whilst remote working was the current working practice, many Councillors had never been busier.
- 3.9 Moving forward, there were no urgent issues that the Group Leaders wished for the Panel to explore, but suggestions to continue looking into and lobbying Government for Local Authorities to be able to hold hybrid committee meetings, especially whilst cases of COVID-19 remained high, as well as benefits such as reduced costs in mileage and environmental benefits. In terms of meeting the Council's Climate Emergency, the Panel noted that electric cars and cost of mileage would be considered in the future but felt it was not appropriate for this year's review.
- 3.10 In terms of the scheme, the general view was that it was fit for purpose, both in terms of the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances and rates.

4.0 Annual Meeting of Panel Chairs and Advisers

- 4.1 During the meeting on 30 September 2021, attended by the Chair, a Member of the Panel and Advisors, a number of allowances related issues were discussed, for example, the members allowance survey results 2021 and also inviting comments on matters for inclusion in the 2022 survey, the draft guidance for Independent Remuneration Panels recently drafted by Graham Russell (advisor to SW Councils), general updates from each Panel Chair, claims for travelling, subsistence and accommodation, Council's processes for the approval of claims and professional development conversations with Members

5.0 **Comparisons and Benchmarking**

- 5.1 The Panel considered the recent (2021) SW Councils survey on allowances. The rate of basic allowance paid in Devon was the top of the survey data when compared to other South West Shire Counties at £13,213. This improvement was pleasing to the Panel as Devon's position had dropped to the mid to lower ranges, which was a cause for concern given the population of Devon is significantly higher than those in other Shire Counties. As an example, Somerset County Council paid £11,540 and Gloucestershire £10,500. The larger unitary Council's were higher than Devon, with Cornwall County Council paying £14,870 and Wiltshire £13,833 which would be expected.
- 5.2 However, a survey of schemes showed that for 2020/21, Kent County Council topped the list with a basic allowance of £15,406. Many others were mid-range such as East Sussex County Council at £13,149 (2020/2021), Surrey County Council at £12,602, West Sussex at £12,202 and Hampshire County Council at £12,833. Buckinghamshire County Council at £11,998 (although the figures were for 2019/2020). Oxfordshire County Council were one of the lowest at £11,014.
- 5.3 The Panel also took the data from the South West Survey and the South East data and assessed the allowance per head of population.

Council Name (Shire Counties)	Population	Basic Allowance for 2020/21 (Members)	Per Head of Population*
Devon County Council	795,000	£13,213 (60)	£0.99
Gloucestershire County Council	633,558	£10,500 (53)	£0.88
Somerset County Council	560,631	£11,540 (55)	£1.13

Council Name	Population	Basic Allowance for 20/21	Per Head of Population*
East Sussex	558,626	£13,149 (50)	£1.18
Hampshire County Council	1,382,000	£12,833 (78)	£0.72
Kent County Council	1,581,000	£15,406 (81)	£0.79
Oxfordshire County Council	691,700	£11,014 (63)	£1.00
West Sussex County Council	836,000	£12,202 (70)	£1.02

* Basic Allowance x Number of Councillors.

5.4 The Panel previously undertook a large scale review in which they considered how the Basic Allowance had been calculated to ensure it was still fit for purpose. The calculation was the average non manual daily rate, less 33% for the public service ethos. As the data was no longer collected, the Panel researched other baselines, which included one used by Cheltenham Borough Council (median salary for the South West) and a calculation which had been determined by Surrey's IRP (median salary level for full time white collar workers resident in Surrey, with a 33% discount as the voluntary element and the time commitment of the role as 18 hours per week (0.5 FTE)).

5.5 The Panel applied this Surrey methodology to Devon but using the Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in Devon for 2021.

$$^1£28,496 \text{ less } ^233\% (£9404) = £19,092 \dots\dots\dots X ^3 0.71 = £13,556$$

¹ median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in Devon 2020...Office for National Statistics (ONS)

² public service discount

³ adjustment for full-time equivalent – using figures from National Census for Counties of 29 hours

5.6 The allowance for Devon (if calculated in this manner) made the basic rate £13,556. Given the current allowance of £13,213 which included the LGA median wage rise (up until April 2010) and staff pay increases (from April 2011), the Panel were satisfied that the calculation used was fit for purpose.

5.7 The Panel also felt it prudent to use the most recent data available, so utilised the National Census Data from 2018 (the latest available), extracting the figures submitted by Members of Devon County Council.

5.8 The Panel previously had raised concern over the number of 'twin trackers' (where a Councillor is a Member of more than one Authority), in view of the implications for workload. With Elections in May 2013, the figure was 39 Councillors out of the 60 who were on District Council as well as the County Council (65%). After the 2017 Elections, the number was 41 out of 62, (66%) so the situation at that point remained largely unchanged. However, following the most recent Elections in May 2021, the number had reduced to 38 (63%).

5.9 The Panel also wanted to keep a watching brief on expenses rates for overnight stays in London. Members had previously felt the rate was still not fit for purpose. Members considered a number of other benchmarks, for example the London rate for judiciary, which was currently lower than the County Councils and also the average daily rate for London as calculated by Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC). This revised figure for 2020 was £153.00, a rise of £2.10 since 2019 (or 1.4%). Due to the pandemic, the current rates are much lower, but given these are unusual times, it appears reasonable to not adjust the figures, until such time when there is more stability in the hospitality sector.

5.10 However, given the comments from Members of the Council, the Panel, in last years review, suggested that, in the absence of the better benchmark, the Council use the PWC benchmark but that in some instances the Council might need to take a flexible approach to accommodation, with wording in the

scheme that ensures the Council secures best value for money whilst taking into account all relevant factors (e.g. safety, location, convenience, availability and proximity to the venue etc) and the Head of Democratic Services being asked to authorise any expenditure over that amount. This was accepted by the Council.

6.0 National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2018

- 6.1 The above study was previously carried out every two years to provide a comprehensive snapshot of local government representation and analysis of trends over time. The 2018 Census remains the most current census available, however comments from Devon Members suggest that workloads have increased during the Pandemic. The census asks Councillors about their work as Councillors, their views on a range of issues and also their personal background. The last two studies were carried out in 2013 and then in 2018. As 2018 is the latest data available it is appropriate it is reflected in this Report.
- 6.2 The 2018 Census was conducted entirely online. All 17,770 Councillors in England were emailed a unique link to the questionnaire. A total of 2,627 councillors responded, a response rate of 15%. This was lower than previous censuses and was most likely due to the move from a paper-based exercise. The 2018 response rate of 15% compared with 38% in 2013, 33% in 2010, and 45% in 2008. The Panel previously expressed their disappointment at the low response rate in the 2018 survey.
- 6.3 The key findings were presented in three sections, work as a Councillor, issues and views of Councillors and personal background of Councillors. It should be noted that the figures in this section apply nationally and to all types of Council's (Counties, Shire Districts, Unitary Councils, Metropolitan Districts and London Boroughs).

6.3.1 Councillors' work

- On average, Councillors had served for 9.2 years in their current authority; 47% had served for up to 5 years while 11% had done so for more than 20 years;
- 54% of Councillors held a position of responsibility, most commonly membership of the Cabinet/Executive;
- Councillors spent, on average, 22 hours per week on council business, the largest aspect of which was on Council meetings (8 hours); and
- 39% of Councillors were also members of another public body.

6.3.2 Councillors' views

- 85% of Councillors became Councillors in order to serve their community;
- 60% thought that representing local residents was among the most important role of Councillors, and 51% thought the same of supporting local communities;
- 34% of Councillors thought they were very effective in their role, and 57% fairly effective;

- 85% would recommend the role of Councillor to others; and
- 68% intended to stand for re-election.

6.3.3 Councillors' personal characteristics

- 45% of Councillors were retired, and 26% in full or part-time employment;
- 64% of Councillors held other voluntary or unpaid positions, such as school governorships;
- 68% of Councillors held a degree or equivalent qualification; only 3% did not hold any qualification;
- 63% of Councillors were male, and 36% female;
- The average age of councillors in 2018 was 59 years; 15% were aged under-45 and 43% were aged 65 or over;
- 96 % described their ethnic background as white;
- 88% described their sexual orientation as heterosexual or straight;
- 16% had a long-term health problem or disability which limited their daily activities; and
- 36% of Councillors had a responsibility as a carer, most commonly looking after a child.

6.4 Devon has many of the same issues as other Authorities in terms of attracting younger members. Whilst Devon has some younger Councillors, (and a small number have been in Cabinet positions), the majority are over retirement age.

6.5 The age and gender profile of Devon's Councillors was gathered after the 2021 elections, and is highlighted overleaf.

Councillor Gender/Age Profile of Devon County Council - 2021			
Age Group	Male	Female	Totals
Under 30	1 (1.6%)	0	1 (1.6%)
30-39	2 (3.3%)	1 (1.6%)	3 (5%)
40-49	7 (11.6%)	4 (6.6%)	11 (18.3%)
50-59	12 (20%)	3 (5%)	15 (25%)
60-69	10 (16.6%)	8 (13.3%)	18 (30%)
70 and over	10 (16.6%)	2 (3.3%)	12 (20%)
Totals	42 (70%)	18 (30%)	60 (100%)

6.6

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When this data is cross referenced with the recently conducted census data from 2018, this shows that in a South West Comparison, the male to female ratio was 65% male compared to 34% female. Devon therefore is slightly lower than the South West Average in terms of female Councillors.

Gender – South West		
Female	591	34%
Male	1119	65%
Prefer to self-describe	6	0%
Prefer not to say	8	0%

6.7

For the South West, the age profile is as listed below. Devon has 20% of its Members over the age of 70, so slightly lower than the South West profile.

Age – South West		
Under 25	6	0%
25-29	20	1%
30-34	47	3%
35-39	28	2%

6.8

40-44	88	5%
45-49	61	4%
50-54	177	10%
55-59	258	15%
60-64	226	13%
65-59	299	18%
70 or over	482	28%
Average (years)	60.9	

The census data also allows a comparison to other Counties (nationally). In this instance the ratio is 71% male and 28% female. This is within 1 percentage point of Devon's profile.

Gender - Counties		
Female	423	28%
Male	1073	71%
Prefer to self-describe	0	0%
Prefer not to say	14	1%

6.9

In terms of the age profile for Counties (nationally), this again is detailed below. Again, Devon is slightly lower than the Counties average in terms of Members over the age of 70.

Age - Counties		
Under 25	0	0%
25-29	41	3%
30-34	29	2%
35-39	17	1%
40-44	28	2%
45-49	66	5%
50-54	140	9%
55-59	214	15%
60-64	235	16%
65-59	289	20%
70 or over	412	28%
Average (years)	61.6	

6.10

The Panel have previously been concerned over the gender / age split, demonstrating the need to consider a scheme of allowances to attract a more diverse Council for the future. Whilst the allowances were raised in 2018, the Panel do not wish to see a return to the position where they have been allowed to become 'out of kilter' once again.

7.0 Member Development, Charter Status Plus and Induction

7.1 The Panel have always been interested in Member training and development and therefore supportive of the Council's initiatives such as competency frameworks, appraisals and personal assessments of Members Learning and Development needs. The Panel recognised the Councils accreditation and re-accreditation of Charter status at Charter-Plus level for Member Development.

7.2 The feedback from South West Councils in that assessment had said there were a number of areas of excellent practice in Devon and that.....

.....'it was great to see the continuous improvement in the way that Members are supported and the strong working relationship between Members and Officers'.

7.3 The Council has a focus on continuous professional development and a willingness by Councillors to ensure their skills, knowledge and understanding are up-to-date, so that they can fulfil their role successfully. Member Development is part of the fabric of the way the Council works and this is an ongoing process. Members have also been supported in recent months during the Pandemic to work in a new way, with a focus on ICT skills to fully participate in remote meetings.

7.4 The Council is currently exploring re-accreditation for the third time, but the pandemic has delayed this activity.

7.5 Following Elections in May 2021, the usual approach to Member Induction was unable to happen due to COVID-19 and being unable to conduct large in-person training sessions. Therefore, for the first time, the Council conducted multiple online sessions, including a Welcome to Devon morning hosted by the Chief Executive, three Q&A Panel Member sessions with Chief Officers and ICT sessions followed by a range of training, briefings and development opportunities held over the summer and into the autumn. Whilst it was unfortunate that new Members especially were unable to meet fellow Councillors in-person, there were a number of benefits including Members from further afield not having to travel over 2hrs for a 30min ICT training session and all training was recorded and uploaded to a Members Sharepoint site where they could watch it back at a later date if they were unable to attend.

7.6 Feedback from Members was extremely supportive of providing online learning as part of the overall offer and also in the delivery of training and development over a number of months. Many found the sessions more interesting and interactive, and understood the need to maintain social distancing measures during the height of the pandemic.

8.0 Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

- 8.1 The Panel has concluded that the structure of the Allowance Scheme for Devon is fit for purpose and based on sound principles.
- 8.2 The Panel has conducted a wide-ranging review, taking into account the usual benchmarking data, organisational structures, view of other Authorities, workloads of Councillors and the most recently conducted census survey, the views of Members and other relevant factors.
- 8.3 Up until 2017, the Panel had consistently recommended increases in the Basic Allowance, with corresponding increases in the level of SRAs and the recommendations had not been implemented, hence the level of allowances in Devon had fallen behind. The Panel were pleased that in 2018, 2019 and 2020, the Council listened to their recommendations and their strong evidence base to increase the Basic Allowance. The Council also agreed with the Panel in 2021 to freeze allowances.
- 8.4 Taking into account the evidence available and for the reasons set out above, the panel recommends that:
- (a) The basic structure of the current scheme is endorsed and retained;
 - (b) The Panel feels it important not to depart from the panel's established formula of calculating the basic allowance and that the basic allowance continues to increase by the NJC Staff Pay Award for 2021/22 (still being negotiated at the time of writing this report) to take effect from May 2022 and the multipliers be recalculated accordingly;
 - (c) that the overnight rate for London remain at £153.00, in line with the rates calculated by Price Waterhouse Cooper for the average daily rate (ADR) for London from 2019 (noting that the most recent figures are very much skewed due to the impact of the pandemic on the hospitality sector
 - (d) Careful consideration should be given, in the future, to the levels of allowances to ensure they keep pace with the economy generally;
 - (e) The sustained reduction in the number of SRA's be welcomed and that the levels be kept below the 50% threshold, as is currently the case;
 - (f) That the Panel reiterate their desire that Group Leaders take a robust approach to the performance management of their Members and places on record their thanks for the levels of reassurance provided by Group Leaders for dealing with performance issues; and

- (g) The Panel wish to place on record their appreciation to Councillors for their Leadership throughout the pandemic, noting that Members had worked tirelessly in their communities, especially given concerns raised in paragraph 3.5, and also adapted to remote working practices to ensure democratic processes continued.

8.5 The panel would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this review, including Karen Strahan (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager) and Stephanie Lewis (Deputy Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager) who provided helpful advice, guidance and administrative support. The Panel particularly noted Devon's Democratic Services Team had been asked for exemplars of good practice by other Local Authorities.

HM/BH/SB
February 2022

Panels Recommended Allowances from May 2022
Based on a Freeze of Allowances.

<u>Role</u>	<u>Multiplier</u>	<u>Amount</u> <u>(from May</u> <u>2022)</u> <u>1.75%</u>	<u>Amount</u> <u>(from May</u> <u>2022)</u> <u>2%</u>	<u>Amount</u> <u>(from May</u> <u>2022)</u> <u>2.5%</u>
Basic (currently £13,213)	N/A	£13,444	£13,477	£13,543
Leader	2.5	£33,610	£33,693	£33,858
Deputy	2.0	£26,888	£26,954	£27,086
Cabinet	1.5	£20,166	£20,216	£20,315
Chair Scrutiny	0.73	£9,814	£9,838	£9,886
Vice Chair Scrutiny	0.365	£4,907	£4,919	£4,943
Chair of Council	0.8	£10,755	£10,782	£10,834
Vice-Chair of Council	0.2785	£3,744	£3,753	£3,772
Chair – Development	0.5	£6,722	£6,739	£6,772
Vice Chair – Development	0.25	£3,361	£3,369	£3,386
Chair, Appeals	0.25	£3,361	£3,369	£3,386
Chair, Investment / Pension	0.5	£6,722	£6,739	£6,772
Chair, Farms Estate	0.25	£3,361	£3,369	£3,386
Chair, Public Rights of Way	0.25	£3,361	£3,369	£3,386
Chair, Procedures	0.25	£3,361	£3,369	£3,386
Chair, Audit	0.25	£3,361	£3,369	£3,386
*Leader, LD (9)	0.5	£6,722	£6,739	£6,772
*Leader, Labour (7)	0.5	£6,722	£6,739	£6,772
*Leader, Independent (5)	0.25	£3,361	£3,369	£3,386

* A multiplier of 1.0 for Groups more than 20% of the Councils size (therefore 12 or more members);

* A multiplier of 0.50 for groups between 10% and 20% (therefore 6 or more Members (up to 11 Members);

* A multiplier of 0.25 for groups of less than 10% (2-5 Members)