



# **Gravesham Borough Council**

## **Report of Independent Remuneration Panel**

**October/November 2023**

*\* Please note that Councillors are also referred to as Members. You may see both terms used throughout this report*

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This report is a synopsis of the deliberations and recommendations made by the Panel.

## **1. Background**

1.1 The Panel is established under The Local Authorities' (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021) ("the 2003 Regulations"). These Regulations, which arise out of the relevant provisions contained in the Local Government Act 2000, require all local authorities to establish and maintain an IRP to review and provide advice on Members' Allowances on a periodic basis. All Councils are required to convene the IRP and seek its advice before making any changes or amendments to its Members' Allowances Scheme.

## **2. Appointment of Panel**

2.1 The Panel must comprise of no less than three and no more than five persons, none of whom is formally connected with the Council, has a publicly declared political affiliation and/or has been found guilty of a criminal offence. They must not, however, be disqualified from being a member of a local authority. The Panel must be independent, well qualified to discharge its functions and be representative of a broad cross-section of local communities.

2.2 Persons appointed to the Panel may each serve for a period of four years from the date of their appointment and may be re-appointed on the expiry of their term of office, subject to no person serving on the Panel for more than a total of eight years.

2.3 The Protocol for the Appointment of an IRP is set out in Annex 3.7 of the Council's Constitution.

2.4 The following persons have been appointed by the Council to serve on the IRP:-

- Ms Julie Hobson (term of office expires on 1 April 2026).
- Ms Claudette Bramble (term of office expires on 1 October 2027).
- Mr Kevin Burbidge (term of office expires on 1 October 2027).
- Mr Jason Owen (term of office expires on 1 October 2027).

2.5 The Chair of the Panel, Ms Julie Hobson, was elected at its first meeting on 26 October 2023.

2.6 The Panel's current term of office is detailed with section 2.4 of the report.

2.7 All members of the Panel declared that they were not active members of a political party or associated with any Councillors serving on the Council.

## **3. Terms of Reference**

3.1 The role of the IRP is to make recommendations to Council about the type and level of allowances to be paid to Councillors. In particular, to make recommendations on:-

- the amount of basic allowance that shall be payable to elected Members;
- the roles and responsibilities for which a special responsibility allowance is payable and the amount of each such allowance;
- the amount of travel, subsistence and dependant care allowances to be paid to Councillors and the means by which they are determined; and
- general issues associated with the allowances/scheme.

3.2 Persons appointed to the Panel are expected to work with other Panel Members and Officers of the Council to:-

- be compliant with all relevant codes of conduct;
- fully take part in the activities and decision-making role of the IRP;
- develop, as necessary, a working knowledge of the role of Councillors, the Members' Allowances Scheme, the structure and operation of Gravesham Borough Council and its policies and practices;
- develop as necessary a working knowledge of the statutory requirements, regulations and Government guidance concerning Councillors' allowances; and
- develop, as necessary, a working knowledge of the Councillors' Allowances Schemes operating in other local authorities and public bodies.

#### 4. Purpose of the Review

4.1 An in-depth review was undertaken in 2017. The report details the methodology/approach taken in the setting and reviewing the Members' Allowances Scheme at that time.

One of the recommendations of the IRP at that time, which was approved by the Council, was that the allowances be increased in line with any pay awards given to Gravesham Borough Council staff. The regulations state that

*'Where an authority has regard to an index for the purpose of annual adjustment of allowances it must not rely on that index for longer than a period of four years before seeking a further recommendation from the independent remuneration panel established in respect of that authority on the application of an index to its scheme'.*

As the allowances had been adjusted annually over a four-year period, the Council was required to review its scheme again in 2022.

Therefore, the most recent review was undertaken in April 2022. Due to an in-depth review being undertaken in 2017 and changes on the horizon, such as the Local Elections and Electoral Boundary review, a brief/interim review was undertaken at that time.

The recommendation of the IRP, which was approved by the Council, was that there be no change to the Members' Allowances Scheme until after the Local Elections in May 2023, at which time a further review of the scheme be undertaken by the IRP. The existing arrangement for the annual indexation of basic and special responsibility allowances, in line with the nationally negotiated pay awards given to Gravesham Borough Council Staff, be continued.

As the Local Elections had now been held, the IRP was asked to undertake a further full review of the Members' Allowances Scheme.

## 5. Review Process

5.1 The Panel was convened on 26 October 2023 and 13 November 2023.

5.2 Prior to the first meeting, the Panel was issued with an agenda pack that included the following information/data:-

- Role of the IRP.
- Legislation and Guidance (including the allowances that can be paid).
- Background information.
- Current Political Arrangements.
- Background information from the Constitution:-
  - *How the Council operates (Summary and The Articles);*
  - *Responsibility of functions including Cabinet Structure (Annex 1 and Annex 6);*
  - *Shadow Cabinet Structure (Annex 7); and*
  - *Municipal calendar for 2022/23 and 2023/24 together with the frequency of meetings from May 2020 onwards.*
- Financial envelope.
- Current Members' Allowances Scheme.
- Areas to be considered by the IRP for possible inclusion.
- Benchmarking of Members' Allowances Scheme:-
  - *Kent;*
  - *CIPFA Neighbours; and*
  - *South East Employers Members' Allowance Survey Results 2023.*

5.3 The first meeting allowed for the Panel to review the information contained with agenda pack, ask officers questions and request any further information/research.

5.4 The second meeting allowed for the Panel to consider the follow up information/research and formulate its recommendations.

5.5 The Panel was supported by:-

- Bhupinder Gill, Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) acting in the role of Monitoring Officer;
- Lisa Nyon, Assistant Director (Corporate Services); and
- Simon Walsh, Head of Democratic Services.

## 6. Legislation and Guidance

6.1 In formulating its recommendations, the Panel has taken into account the following statutory legislation and guidance:-

- the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, Section 18 (as amended by the Local Government Act 2000) - the underlying authority for basic, special responsibility and child and dependent carers' allowances;
- the Local Government (Members Allowances) Regulations 2003; and
- Government Guidance issued at the time of the 2003 consolidated Regulations.

- 6.2 The Panel also considered a chart that summarised the legal provisions relating to individual types of allowance together with a list of duties for which allowances were payable:-

Mandatory

Basic Allowance.

Optional

Special Responsibility Allowance.

Dependent Carers' Allowance.

Travelling and Subsistence Allowance.

Co-optees' Allowance.

## **7. Current Members' Allowances Scheme**

- 7.1 The methodology used in the 2017 review was in-depth, with the IRP considering at that time the approach to determining allowances in addition to the figures to be recommended. The Panel recommended a methodology for both the basic and special responsibility allowances which was subsequently approved by the Council. The recommended methodology was the favoured approach taken by other local authorities.

Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances

- 7.2 Due to there being a noticeable differential between Gravesham's special responsibility allowances and the Kent average, it was felt it was more appropriate for the Panel to consider benchmarking against the Kent averages instead of Gravesham's CIPFA Neighbours and the approved methodology; as using the CIPFA Neighbours/methodology was unlikely to bring the allowances to a comparable level.

Travel and Subsistence

- 7.3 The travel and subsistence scheme for Councillors is aligned with that of Officers.

Dependent Carers' and Childcare

- 7.4 Childcare and dependent carers' allowance is paid at the National Minimum Wage with flexibility for an enhanced payment in exceptional circumstances.

Indexation

- 7.5 The basic and special responsibility allowances are increased in line with the average percentage pay award given to Gravesham Borough Council staff. The annual indexation of allowances initially commenced in 2017.
- 7.6 The Panel note that, in line with legislation, the IRP met in April 2022 to undertake a review of the Members' Allowances Scheme as the annual indexation of allowances could not be relied on for longer than a four-year period. The recommendation of the IRP, which was approved by the Council, was that there be no change to the Members' Allowances Scheme until after the Local Elections in May 2023, at which time a further review of the scheme be undertaken by the IRP. The existing arrangement for the annual indexation of basic and special responsibility allowances, in line with the average percentage pay award given to Gravesham Borough Council Staff, be continued.

## 8. Current Political Arrangement

8.1 The Panel note that there have been changes to the political arrangement/committee structure of the Council since the previous review undertaken in April 2022.

The most significant changes being that:-

- the Local Government Boundary Commission for England undertook an electoral review and recommended new patterns of wards so that each Member represented about the same number of electors. The review resulted in Gravesham's wards being reduced from 18 to 17 and the Members being reduced from 44 to 39 . This change came into effect at Local Elections in May 2023.

8.2 Following the Local Elections, there are now 39 elected Members. The Labour Group forms the ruling administration with the Conservative Group being in opposition. The current composition of the Council is:-

- Labour - 22 Members
- Conservative - 17 Members

8.3 The Council continues to operate a Cabinet arrangement with six Members of the Cabinet (Executive); Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader and four Portfolio Holders. The Cabinet is the key policy making body.

8.4 The arrangements for the conduct of the Council's business provides for a number of Committees, Boards and Panels to deal with specific tasks and functions. These bodies have a Chair and a Vice-Chair and their membership reflects the political balance of the Council.

8.5 There have not been any significant changes, following the Local Elections, to the Committee Structure. The Committees, Boards and Panels remain the same except for the Committee size.

8.6 The Opposition Group has a Leader, Deputy Leader and Shadow Cabinet, although they are not represented in the Cabinet, they play an important role in policy developments and implementation through the process of overview and scrutiny and/or participation in Cabinet Committees.

## 9. Financial envelope

9.1 The Panel note that the existing Financial Envelope for the 2023/24 financial year is £301,130. Going forward, an inflationary element has been added each year (matching assumptions around staffing costs) resulting in the following budgeted amounts for future years:-

2024/25	£316,170
2025/26	£325,670
2026/27	£332,180

9.2 The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) confirmed that a 5% inflator had been built into the budget for 2023/24 and depending on the outcome of the review the allowances could be reduced, kept the same or uplifted.

- 9.3 The Panel was informed that the basic and special responsibility allowances are subject to annual indexation, in line with the average percentage pay award given to Gravesham Borough Council Staff.
- 9.4 The pay increase for staff in 2022/23 varied across the pay scale but the average increase was 5.5% which was applied to Members allowances. It was reported at the first meeting that the final staff pay settlement for 2023/24 was still pending agreement. However, at the second meeting, the Panel was informed that the final settlement for 2023/24 had now been agreed and, again, the increase varied across the pay scale but the average increase was calculated at 5.54% which had been applied to the allowances via financial modelling which was subsequently presented to the Panel.

## 10. Areas considered by the IRP for possible inclusion

- 10.1 The Panel was presented with the following areas for possible inclusion/expansion in the Members' Allowances Scheme. These areas had been noted for consideration at the time of being raised by Members and/or Officers. Each area was accompanied with background and comparative information.

- **Childcare and Dependent Carers' Allowance**

*The IRP was asked to consider:-*

- *the removal of a specific amount being included within the Scheme in relation to the NLW, i.e. £7.50, as that amount will increase annually;*
- *if the NLW is to remain as the amount claimable – is that the minimum or maximum amount claimable? If it is a minimum amount, at what hourly value is the absolute maximum before it is unreasonable;*
- *the inclusion of text to state that a Member cannot claim for multiple carers for multiple dependants, if that is its intention;*
- *if the approved duties defined in schedule 2 should be updated to include Member training/briefing sessions which Members have been invited to attend by Gravesham Borough Council and where the purpose of the meeting is directly relevant to the Council's functions and priorities and is a meeting to which Members of more than one political group have been invited.*

Following a detailed discussion, **the Panel recommends the following:-**

- *the removal of a specific amount being included within the Scheme in relation to the NLW due to the annual increase;*
- *a Member cannot claim costs for multiple carers for multiple dependants; only one carer can be paid per meeting/training session;*
- *Members were able to claim back the cost, up to the current NLW hourly rate, of carers when attending Council meetings and/or training sessions that were deemed pertinent to their role as a Councillor;*
- *there will be no limitation on the total amount of hours claimable per instance/claim subject to the hourly rate not exceeding the NLW and the claim being reasonable.*
- *the duties defined in schedule 2 to be updated to include Member training/briefing sessions which Members have been invited to attend by Gravesham Borough Council and where the purpose of the*



*meeting was directly relevant to the Council's functions and priorities and was a meeting to which Members of more than one political group have been invited;*

- *Members could claim for carers related to them provided they were not residing in the same household.*

*There would be exemptions to the allowance; Members would not be reimbursed if:-*

- *they attended a Member briefing session that was only given to their political group; and/or*
- *it was not deemed essential to their role as a Member as determined by the Chief Executive.*

- **Sickness and Parental Leave (to cover maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave)**

*The IRP was asked to consider whether the Scheme should include sickness and/or parental leave and if so, what entitlement should be given?*

Following a detailed discussion, ***the Panel recommends the following:-***

- *the Member Allowance Scheme to include sickness and/or parental leave and Members to be paid all their allocated allowances up to six months during their sickness/parental leave; and*
- *Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 to supersede the rule and Members will still be required to seek a dispensation from Full Council for non-attendance at Council meetings before the six-month period elapsed since the last meeting they attended.*

- **Support for Members with disabilities**

*The IRP was asked to consider the inclusion of support for Members with disabilities.*

Following a detailed discussion, ***the Panel recommends the following:-***

- *the Council is committed to supporting elected Members with a disability and would make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs. The Council would assist with any disability-related costs if they were not already being met through a disability grant or relevant benefit, for example, where there was a need for sign language interpreters/Palantypist, and wherever possible would ensure the needs of Members with a disability would be accommodated; and*
- *the Committee Services Team would work with the Member(s) and relevant departments/organisations to overcome any barriers that may arise due to a disability and would arrange specialist support/equipment where this is deemed necessary for the role.*

- **Part-Year Entitlements**

*The IRP was asked to consider the inclusion of text to state that, in the year of Local Elections, Members who have been appointed to specific roles such as the Mayor and Leader of the Council, prior to the Local Elections, shall be entitled to receive payment of their allowances (including his/her SRA) until the date of the Annual Council Meeting held after the Election even if they are not re-elected as Members unless he/she resigns from office, is disqualified or otherwise removed from office.*

Following a detailed discussion, **the Panel recommends the following:-**

- *In the year of Local Elections, Members who had been appointed as Mayor and the Leader of the Council, prior to the Local Elections, shall be entitled to receive payment of their allowances (including his/her SRA) until the date of the Annual Council Meeting held after the Election even if they were not re-elected as Members unless he/she resigns from office, was disqualified or otherwise removed from office.*

- **Payments**

*The IRP was asked to consider the inclusion of text to state that allowances are regarded as income and therefore are liable for tax and national insurance deductions and receiving allowances may also affect any entitlement to social security benefits and that advice should be sought directly from the Department for Work and Pensions.*

Following a detailed discussion, **the Panel recommends the following:-**

- *Allowances are regarded as income and therefore are liable for tax and national insurance deductions and receiving allowances may also affect any entitlement to social security benefits and that advice should be sought directly from the Department for Work and Pensions. It was the individual's responsibility to declare any additional income to HMRC or the DWP.*

- **'Special Cabinet Advisor, Commercial' Position**

*The IRP was asked to consider whether it is of the opinion that the 'Special Cabinet Advisor, Commercial' involves time and effort equal to or greater than those position currently receiving an SRA, such as formally constituted Cabinet Members? If so, what level of SRA should be paid and whether it should be backdated from the date of appointment to that role?*

Following a detailed discussion, *the Panel recognise and appreciate the hard work and responsibility of the 'Special Cabinet Advisor, Commercial' position. It is a unique role being responsible for the monitoring of the Council's Commercial Activities, Property Investment, Climate Change and Outside Bodies and Partnerships.*

*The Panel note that the role was specifically created in response to the authority developing a much more commercial and entrepreneurial outlook to delivery of aspects of its Corporate Plan – leading to the creation of various*

*commercial entities (such as Rosherville Limited, and its associated subsidiaries) as well as steering groups for major regeneration schemes within the Borough where Council involvement could be required to realise the development potential (noting that the planning application process is completely separate and dealt with by the Planning Committee).*

*This role had previously been performed by a Cabinet Member, but given the legal powers vested in Members of the Cabinet, the Panel note that this repeatedly led to that/those individual/s having to declare an interest and excuse themselves from Cabinet discussions – ultimately defeating the objective of that Member oversight at the highest level when those decisions – often involving significant financial outlay or risk to the authority – were taken by the Cabinet.*

*The Panel is of the view that the advisory role is unique and carries a similar level of responsibility to that of a formally constituted Cabinet Member therefore **the Panel recommends that the role should receive an SRA commensurate of a Cabinet Member and that it is the decision of Full Council as to whether the role sits within or outside of the Cabinet. Should Full Council support the recommendation, the Panel recommends that the SRA for this role be backdated from the date of appointment to that role.***

## **11. Benchmarking/Determining the Basic Allowance and SRA Increases**

- 11.1 In addition, the Monitoring Officer explained to the Panel that the basic allowance for Members needed to be determined as well as any increases to the SRA's. The Panel was directed to the benchmarking which showed GBC's allowances against other local authorities in Kent as well as Gravesham's CIPFA Neighbours.
- 11.2 The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) reconfirmed that a 5% inflator had been built into the budget for 2023/24 and depending on the outcome of the review the allowances could be reduced, kept the same or uplifted.
- 11.3 The Panel note that the majority of Gravesham's allowances are below the average of Members allowances paid in Kent and felt that Members worked hard, therefore their allowances should be reflective of the Kent average. It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer, Assistant Director (Corporate Services) and the Head of Democratic Services would complete some financial modelling outside of the first meeting to bring all Members allowances in line with the Kent average (where currently lower than the rate), whilst considering the financial envelope, and would report back to the second meeting.
- 11.4 At the second meeting, the Panel was presented with the financial modelling which brought all Members allowances in line with the Kent average (where currently lower than the rate) and also incorporated the final settlement of the 2023/24 pay award. The Panel was also presented with the impact that these changes will have on the financial envelope. The Panel acknowledged that it continues to be an economically tough climate for both the Council and its residents and that any proposals will have an impact on the Council's budgets and, consequently, its frontline services. However, the Panel was mindful that Members worked hard within their roles as elected Councillors and should be recompensed for that work/role. The scheme should also ensure that people from all walks of life and financial circumstances can be attracted to fulfil the role of an elected Councillor within the community. **The Panel**

***recommends that all Members allowances be brought in line with the Kent average (where currently lower than the rate).***

- 11.5 The Panel was informed that under the current scheme, any Member in receipt of more than one SRA will be paid 100% of the first SRA but only 50% of the second (lower value) SRA. ***The Panel is supportive of this provision however recommends that a restriction be put in place in that any Member in receipt of more than one SRA will be paid 100% of the first SRA, 50% of the second (lower value) SRA and no further SRAs will be payable where a Member occupies three or more positions qualifying for such an allowance.***
- 11.6 Should Full Council support the new scheme, ***the Panel recommends that it be backdated to the start of the year (9 May 2023) when Councillors took up office excluding special responsibility allowances which will be backdated from the date of appointment to that role.***

## **12. Conclusion**

- 12.1 The Panel was asked to evaluate the evidence presented to them and agree a way forward in reviewing the Members' Allowances Scheme. The Panel was informed that reviews may be in-depth or more brief annual/interim reviews; this could be determined by changes such as Local Elections, changes to the committee structures/roles, Electoral reviews, impact of legislation, local/national issues, economic environment etc. In some cases, the Panel may determine that a scheme remains relevant and current and/or a further review to be undertaken at a later/specific date.
- 12.2 The IRP discussed the information/data contained within the agenda pack together with the briefing provided by Officers supporting the Panel. The Panel considered that all of the evidence indicated that the Members' Allowances Scheme, including the methodology, is still fit for purpose however felt that the scheme could be strengthened to bring all those Members allowances (basic and special responsibilities), that are below the Kent average, up to the average figure and incorporate those areas detailed within section 10 of the report.
- 12.3 The Panel acknowledged that it continues to be an economically tough climate for both the Council and its residents and that any proposals will have an impact on the Council's budgets and, consequently, its frontline services. However, the Panel was mindful that Members worked hard within their roles as elected Councillors and should be recompensed for that work/role. The scheme should also ensure that people from all walks of life and financial circumstances can be attracted to fulfil the role of an elected Councillor within the community.
- 12.4 Taking into account all of the above, the Panel has determined those recommendations set out within the appendix to this report.
- 12.5 The Panel would like to extend its thanks to the Officers of the Council for their support.
- ## **13. Recommendation(s)**
- 13.1 The Panel has determined those recommendations set out within the appendix to this report.

## **14. Future Work Programme**

- 14.1 Meetings of the Panel will be called as and when required by the Monitoring Officer and/or Committee Services.
- 14.2 Whilst undertaking the review, it became apparent that there was a significant discrepancy in Gravesham's SRAs compared to the Kent average and this may be due the length of time between each review; the last in-depth review being undertaken in 2017, an interval of six years. It was suggested that although the recommended scheme should be in place for a four-year period that the Panel reconvenes in two years to undertake a brief interim review.

The Panel is supportive of this approach.

## **15 Appendices**

- 15.1 The following document is to be published with the report:
- Recommendations of the IRP – Appendix two
  - Current Members' Allowances Scheme – Appendix three

## **16 Background Papers**

- 16.1 The following background documents were used:
- Gravesham Borough Council's Constitution;
  - Report to Council - Members' Allowances - 21 February 2017;
  - Report to Council - Members' Allowances – 21 June 2022;
  - Relevant legislation and guidance; and
  - Benchmarking of Members' Allowances Scheme (Kent & Nearest Neighbours) together with South East Employers Members' Allowance Survey Results 2023.

Ms Julie Hobson  
Chair of Gravesham Borough Council's Independent Remuneration Panel  
November 2023

### Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel

The Independent Remuneration Panel recommends to Full Council that:-

1. The basic and special responsibility allowances for all Gravesham Borough Councillors should be brought in line with the Kent average, where currently lower than the rate, as detailed in the table below (the financial modelling has been included for Members' consideration) :-

#### Member Allowances - Below average of Kent LAs (as at October 2023)

	2022/23 Agreed Rate	2023/24 Original Budget	2023/24 Post Pay Award	2023/24 Kent Rate	Additional Cost	Kent Rates + % increase			GBC Rates + % increase		
						2024/25 Kent 23/24+ 5%	2025/26 3%	2026/27 2%	2024/25 5%	2025/26 3%	2026/27 2%
Deputy Leader of the Executive	10,640	11,170	11,230	11,880	650	12,470	12,840	13,100	11,790	12,140	12,380
Members of the Executive (excluding the Leader and Deputy Leader)	21,280	22,340	22,460	31,830	9,370	33,420	34,420	35,110	23,580	24,290	24,780
Special Cabinet Advisor, Commercial	-	-	5,610	7,960	2,350	8,360	8,610	8,780	5,890	6,070	6,190
Chair of the Planning Committee	5,320	5,590	5,610	5,910	300	6,210	6,400	6,530	5,890	6,070	6,190
Chair of the Overview Scrutiny Committee	2,660	2,790	2,810	4,190	1,380	4,400	4,530	4,620	2,950	3,040	3,100
Vice-Chair of the Overview Scrutiny Committee	800	840	840	1,270	430	1,330	1,370	1,400	880	910	930
Chair of Finance & Audit Committee	1,330	1,400	1,400	3,480	2,080	3,650	3,760	3,840	1,470	1,510	1,540
Chair of the Licensing Committee	800	840	840	2,410	1,570	2,530	2,610	2,660	880	910	930

Chair of the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee	531	560	560	0	0	0	0	0	590	610	620
<b>Total</b>	<b>48,681</b>	<b>51,120</b>	<b>51,360</b>	<b>68,930</b>	<b>18,130</b>	<b>72,370</b>	<b>74,540</b>	<b>76,040</b>	<b>53,920</b>	<b>55,550</b>	<b>56,660</b>
Basic Allowance	207,400	217,710	218,890	218,890	0	229,830	236,720	241,450	229,830	236,720	241,450
Leader of The Executive	23,940	25,140	25,270	25,270	0	26,530	27,330	27,880	26,530	27,330	27,880
Leader of the Opposition	5,320	5,590	5,610	5,610	0	5,890	6,070	6,190	5,890	6,070	6,190
<b>Total</b>	<b>280,021</b>	<b>299,560</b>	<b>301,130</b>	<b>318,700</b>	<b>18,130</b>	<b>334,620</b>	<b>344,660</b>	<b>351,560</b>	<b>316,170</b>	<b>325,670</b>	<b>332,180</b>

	Current Budgets	Revised Budgets - Kent	Increase to move to Kent Avg	Revised Budgets - GBC	Increase with no changes
<b>2023/24</b>	299,560	N/A	N/A	301,130	1,570
<b>2024/25</b>	305,550	334,620	29,070	316,170	10,620
<b>2025/26</b>	311,660	344,660	33,000	325,670	14,010
<b>2026/27</b>	317,890	351,560	33,670	332,180	14,290
			95,740		40,490

- Any Member in receipt of more than one special responsibility allowance will be paid 100% of the first special responsibility allowance, 50% of the second (lower value) special responsibility allowance and no further special responsibility allowances will be payable where a Member occupies three or more positions qualifying for such an allowance.
- Should the Council be minded to reduce the level of special responsibility allowances payable, the differentials within the hierarchy be maintained.
- Members' allowances be adjusted in line with the nationally negotiated pay awards given to Gravesham Borough Council Staff.
- The new scheme to be backdated to the start of the year (9 May 2023) when Councillors took up office excluding special responsibility allowances which will be backdated from the date of appointment to that role.

6. The travel and subsistence scheme for Councillors be aligned with that of Officers.

7. Update the 'Childcare and Dependent Carers' Allowance' section of the scheme to incorporate the following:-

- *the removal of a specific amount being included within the Scheme in relation to the NLW due to the annual increase;*
- *a Member cannot claim costs for multiple carers for multiple dependants; only one carer can be paid per meeting/training session;*
- *Members were able to claim back the cost, up to the current NLW hourly rate, of carers when attending Council meetings and/or training sessions that were deemed pertinent to their role as a Councillor;*
- *there will be no limitation on the total amount of hours claimable per instance/claim subject to the hourly rate not exceeding the NLW and the claim being reasonable.*
- *the duties defined in schedule 2 to be updated to include Member training/briefing sessions which Members have been invited to attend by Gravesham Borough Council and where the purpose of the meeting was directly relevant to the Council's functions and priorities and was a meeting to which Members of more than one political group have been invited;*
- *Members could claim for carers related to them provided they were not residing in the same household.*

*There would be exemptions to the allowance; Members would not be reimbursed if:-*

- *they attended a Member briefing session that was only given to their political group; and/or*
- *it was not deemed essential to their role as a Member by the Chief Executive.*

8. To include a section within the scheme on 'Sickness and Parental Leave (to cover maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave)' to incorporate the following:-

- *the Member Allowance Scheme to include sickness and/or parental leave and Members to be paid all their allocated allowances up to six months during their sickness/parental leave; and*
- *Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 to supersede the rule and Members will still be required to seek a dispensation from Full Council for non-attendance at Council meetings before the six-month period elapsed since the last meeting they attended.*



9. To include a section within the scheme on 'Support for Members with disabilities' to incorporate the following:-

- *the Council is committed to supporting elected Members with a disability and would make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs. The Council would assist with any disability-related costs if they were not already being met through a disability grant or relevant benefit, for example, where there was a need for sign language interpreters/Palantypist, and wherever possible would ensure the needs of Members with a disability would be accommodated; and*
- *the Committee Services Team would work with the Member(s) and relevant departments/organisations to overcome any barriers that may arise due to a disability and would arrange specialist support/equipment where this is deemed necessary for the role.*

10. Update the 'Part-Year Entitlements' section of the scheme to incorporate the following:-

- *in the year of Local Elections, Members who had been appointed as Mayor and the Leader of the Council, prior to the Local Elections, shall be entitled to receive payment of their allowances (including his/her SRA) until the date of the Annual Council Meeting held after the Election even if they were not re-elected as Members unless he/she resigns from office, was disqualified or otherwise removed from office.*

11. Update the 'Payments' section of the scheme to incorporate the following:-

- *allowances are regarded as income and therefore are liable for tax and national insurance deductions and receiving allowances may also affect any entitlement to social security benefits and that advice should be sought directly from the Department for Work and Pensions. It was the individual's responsibility to declare any additional income to HMRC or the DWP.*

12. In respect of the 'Special Cabinet Advisor, Commercial' position:-

- *the Panel is of the view that the advisory role is unique and carries a similar level of responsibility to that of a formally constituted Cabinet Member therefore the Panel recommends that the role should receive an SRA commensurate of a Cabinet Member and that it is the decision of Full Council as to whether the role sits within or outside of the Cabinet. Should Full Council support the recommendation, the Panel recommends that the SRA for this role be backdated from the date of appointment to that role.*