

Committee:	Council	Date:
Title:	Member Allowance Scheme Review 2026-27	Thursday, 18 December 2025
Report Author:	The Independent Remuneration Panel: Steve Dale (Chair), Brigid Dyson and James Dodson; assisted by Ben Ferguson, Democratic Services Manager bferguson@uttlesford.gov.uk	
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Summary

1. The Council is required to maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to make annual recommendations as to the level of the Basic Allowance and the type and level of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs).
2. In making a scheme of allowances, the Council is required to have regard to the recommendations of an independent panel but is not bound by them.
3. This report sets out the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for the Members' Scheme of Allowances for the municipal year 2026/27.

Recommendations

That the Council:

- I. Agrees to a rise of 3.2% to the current level of basic allowance.
- II. Adopts the change to the Planning Chair allowance and other individual SRAs as set out in Appendix A and detailed in the report, for the municipal year 2026/27.

Financial Implications

4. There would be an additional cost to the Council due to the increase in the level of the basic allowance, the estimated cost of implementing this rise is an increase of £10,688.

Background Papers

None.

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Member surveys have been circulated for the past two annual reviews.
Community Safety	The report raises no community safety concerns.
Equalities	The report has been produced in accordance with the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty.
Health and Safety	The report raises no Health and Safety concerns.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	The recommendation has been made in accordance with The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.
Sustainability	The report raises no sustainability concerns.
Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	The Basic Allowance is available to all UDC members and takes account of general councillor activities, such as attending Council and committee meetings of which the councillor is a member, and work undertaken as a ward member. Special Responsibility Allowances are made available to certain councillors, in addition to the basic allowance, who have special responsibilities in relation to the Council.

Situation

The Independent Remuneration Panel

5. The Panel this year consists of Steve Dale (Chair), Brigid Dyson and James Dodson.

6. In conducting its appraisal, the Panel wanted to ensure that the increase to the basic allowance was proportionate taking into account:-

- The annual rate of inflation.
- The upcoming changes to the Council with Local Government Reorganisation
- The budgetary and financial challenges facing Local Authorities to maintain services.

The Panel has attempted to balance these factors whilst trying to ensure that the remuneration did not act as a disincentive to residents from different backgrounds in coming forward to be Councillors.

Summary of the Review

7. The Panel agreed that the review this year would focus on the basic allowance, with any agreed uplift applied to all Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) as in previous years. The Panel also considered the Planning Chair SRA, following the establishment of the 'Planning Co-Chairs' allowance in July, and the Portfolio Holders allowance.

Basic Allowance

8. The aim of the Basic Allowance is to acknowledge that while some element of the Councillors' role continues to be voluntary, there is financial recompense available in order to encourage people coming forward to serve their local community.
9. The Basic Allowance takes account of the duties and responsibilities of an elected Councillor and acts as the starting point for the calculation of all SRAs. The SRAs are expressed as multiples of the basic allowance.
10. Uttlesford District Council's (UDC) basic allowance is in the mid-range of the local authorities that are used for the benchmarking exercise, and the panel felt that a rise of 3.2% would keep the allowance in range of the benchmarked councils. For consistency, the same councils that have been used in previous reviews were selected.

Benchmarking for the basic allowance is below

Basic Allowances				
Authority	2022	2023	2024	2025
Epping Forest	£4,300.00	£4,300.00	£4,600.00	£4,600.00
East Herts	£5,422.87	£5,678.79	£5,678.79	£5,678.79
Uttlesford	£5,346.49	£5,506.88	£5,727.16	£5,881.79
South Cambridgeshire	£5,148.00	£5,501.00	£5,800.00	£6,090.00
Braintree	£5,154.00	£5,154.00	£6,372.00	£6,728.88
Chelmsford	£6,111.00	£6,645.00	£6,810.00	£6,810.00
Hertsmere	£6,287.00	£6,601.00	£7,324.00	£7,451.00
Stevenage	£8,160.00	£8,490.00	£8,819.00	£8,819.00
Average Basic Allowance 2025	£6,507.43			
Median Basic Allowance 2025	£6,409.44			

11. The local government staff pay award has always been an important factor for the Panel to consider when setting the Basic Allowance, although the link to the staff pay award has not been formalised to maintain flexibility. The staff pay award for 2025-26 has been agreed with an increase of 3.2% for all staff.
12. The Panel looked at the Consumer Price Index (CPI) data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and noted the increase in the index over the 12 months, with the average being 3.3%.

There was an upward trend for inflation that has plateaued over recent months, including a fall in October. The October ONS figure is 3.6%.

Please see the full year data below.

		CPI 12-month rate (%)
2024	Nov	2.6
	Dec	2.5
	Jan	3.0
2025	Feb	2.8
	Mar	2.6
	Apr	3.5
	May	3.4
	Jun	3.6
	Jul	3.8
	Aug	3.8
	Sep	3.8
	Oct	3.6

13. Following discussions and careful consideration the Panel decided that a rise of 3.2% was justified. The following factors contributed to their decision:

- It was in line with the staff pay award of 3.2%.
- The ONS average over the last 12 months was 3.3%.
- The rate of inflation was 3.8% for September 2025 but dropped to 3.6% in October.
- The Panel noted that with the 3.2% increase, the basic allowance would still be in the mid-range in comparison to benchmarked local authorities.

Planning Chair or Co-Chairs Allowance (only one SRA payable at any given time)

14. A new allowance for the Planning Co-Chairs was considered earlier in the year and at the Full Council meeting on the 22 July Councillors agreed to support an amendment which increased the IRP's recommended amount of £3,529.08 to £4,213.21.

15. The proposed amount of £3,529.08 was calculated using the Planning Chair allowance plus the Planning Member allowance divided by two. The amended amount of £4,213.21 used the Portfolio Holders allowance instead of the Planning Chair, justified by these two roles having similar workloads. The two calculations are set out below:

£3,529.08 Planning Chair Allowance (£5,881.79) + Planning Member Allowance (£1,176.36) divided by 2

£4213.21 Portfolio Holder Allowance (£7,250.06) + Planning Member Allowance (£1,176.36) divided by 2

16. To ensure parity in the event that the Council decides to revert back to a single Planning Committee Chair in future, the IRP recommend that the Planning Committee Chair allowance is set at £7,250.06. As with all SRAs, these allowances will also be increased by the 3.2% if the recommendation is approved.

Other Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)

17. The Panel considered the Portfolio Holders allowance and noted that it had received an extra uplift in 2025/26 above the other allowances of 0.8% and in the year before, 2024/25 it had been increased by 6%. The Panel therefore decided that this year it would be increased in line with the recommended Basic Allowance uplift of 3.2%.

18. All other SRAs would also receive the uplift in accordance with the Basic Allowance.

Summary

19. In summary, when making these recommendations the Panel has taken into account that the allowances:-

- give Councillors recompense for the work that they carry out;
- would not provide a disincentive for other people in the community to feel able to come forward and;
- for those Councillors who did not need or want the allowances they noted the provision to forgo an allowance, partially or in full, and felt that this decision remained in the gift of each individual member.

Looking forward

20. The Panel would reconvene next year to consider the allowances for 2027/28 which was likely to be the last year that there would be Uttlesford District Councillors before the new unitary vesting date in 2028. Due to the uncertainty, the scope of this review would be considered next year.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
<p>Member allowances do not continue to be set at a realistic level reflecting duties undertaken, which may deter future prospective councillors.</p> <p>Member allowances are set too high causing strain on the budget and potentially bringing the public service discount into question.</p>	<p>2 – allowances paid to elected members do not reflect the time commitment and level of responsibility demanded.</p> <p>2 – allowances paid to elected members are perceived to be too high for the public service they carry out.</p>	<p>3 – the Council may not be able to attract a diverse range of councillors that reflect the makeup of the community they serve.</p> <p>2 – best value is not achieved and the issue is politicised; the role being mainly voluntary is no longer considered valid.</p>	<p>Adoption of suitable levels of allowances taking account of relevant commitment and responsibility of members.</p> <p>There must be a balance between remuneration for the work carried out by Councillors whilst still taking account of the public service discount expected of members.</p>

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Appendix A

PROPOSED MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME 2026/27

All councillors receive the basic allowance unless they request otherwise. Special responsibility allowances are paid to those who hold responsibility for those positions.

Allowance	Amount
Basic Allowance	£6070.01
Chair of the Council	£4,856.01 + civic expenses
Vice Chair of the Council	£2,428.00
Leader of the Council	£14,871.53
Deputy Leader of the Council	£7,891.01
Portfolio Holders	£7,482.06
Overview/Scrutiny and Ordinary Committee Chairs	£4,249.01
Chair of Audit and Standards Committee	£4,249.01
Chair of Licensing and Environmental Health Committee	£4,249.01
Licensing Panel*	£280.44 subject to attending 10 panel meetings per municipal year a payment will be made to members attending at least 50% of those meetings.
Chair of Planning Committee Or Co-Chair of Planning Committee	£7,482.06 £4,348.03
Members of Planning Committee	£1,214.00
Substitute Members of Planning Committee*	£140.22 subject to attending 5 meetings per municipal year, or 50% of meetings in a municipal year.
Main Opposition Group Leader	£4,249.01

Other Opposition Group Leaders	£2,428.00
Independent representatives on the Standards Committee	£607.00
Independent representatives on the Statutory Officer Discipline and Dismissal Committee	£607.00
Panel members of Independent Remuneration Panel	£607.00

Explanatory notes about how the Special Responsibility Allowances are calculated:

Chair of the Council - 80% of the basic allowance

Vice-Chair – 40% of the basic allowance

Leader of the Council - 245% of the basic allowance

Deputy Leader of the Council - 130% of the basic allowance

Members of the Executive – 123.26% of the basic allowance

Chair of Overview, Scrutiny and Ordinary committees - 70% of the basic allowance

Chair of Audit and Standards Committee – 70% of the basic allowance

Chair of Licensing and Environmental Health Committee - 70% of the basic allowance

Licensing Panel Members – 4.62% of the basic allowance, subject to attending 10 panel meetings per annum a payment will be made to members attending at least 50% of those meetings. *

Chair of Planning Committee – 123.26% of the basic allowance

Co-Chair of Planning Committee – 71.63% of the basic allowance

Members of the Planning Committee – 20% of the basic allowance

Substitute Members of the Planning Committee – 2.31% of the basic allowance, subject to the substitute member attending 50% of Planning Committee meetings, or 5 meetings in the municipal year whichever threshold was reached first. *

Leader of the largest opposition group - 70% of the basic allowance

Leader of all other opposition groups - 40% of the basic allowance

Independent members of the Standards Committee - benchmarked to 10% of the basic allowance

Independent members of the Statutory Officer Discipline and Dismissal Committees - benchmarked to 10% of the basic allowance

Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel - benchmarked to 10% of the basic allowance (although this allowance is not reviewed by the Panel and is agreed independently by the Council)

** Paid in addition to other SRAs.*