



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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Name and date of Committee	COUNCIL – 16 SEPTEMBER 2026
Subject	MEMBER ALLOWANCES SCHEME FOR 2027/28
Wards affected	None
Accountable member	Councillor Andy Graham - Leader of the Council Email: Andy.Graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Andrea McCaskie, Director of Governance and Regulatory Services Email: Andrea.McCaskie@westoxon.gov.uk
Report author	Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Email: Andrew.Brown@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To begin the process of formulating a Members' Allowances Scheme for 2027/28 and up to three subsequent years.
Annexes	None
Recommendations	That Council resolves to: I. Request that the Independent Remuneration Panel reports to Council in early 2027 to make recommendations about a Members' Allowances Scheme for 2027/28 and up to three subsequent years.
Corporate priorities	Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees	None

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The Council is required to adopt a new Members' Allowances Scheme prior to the start of the 2027/28 financial year. In doing so it must have regards to recommendations made by an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). This report seeks approval to commence that process.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Council is required by regulations to make a scheme for the allowances to be paid to members before the beginning of each financial year. A scheme must include provisions for paying a basic allowance, special responsibility allowances, dependants' carers' allowance, travelling and subsistence allowance and co-optees' allowance. A scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index but may not rely on an index for a period of more than four years.
- 2.2** The Council's current scheme for the period 2023-27, which forms Part 7 of the Constitution, is due to expire on 1 April 2027 and has relied on indexation for the maximum period of 4 years. As such the Council will need to agree a new allowances scheme for the period 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2028 and up to three subsequent years. 2027/28 was expected to be the last year of West Oxfordshire District Council before it is abolished and replaced by a new North Oxfordshire unitary council from 1 April 2028. However, the government announced on 7 September 2026 that it will review its local government reorganisation decisions across England. As such, the timeline for local government reorganisation is currently uncertain.
- 2.3** Prior to making or amending an allowances scheme, the Council must have regard to recommendations made to it by its Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). The IRP comprises at least three persons who are suitably skilled members of the public who are independent of the District Council.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

- 3.1** The Council currently has a 5-Member IRP made up of suitably qualified individuals who are independent of the District Council. Council last appointed IRP members in January 2023 and in doing so agreed to delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to make one or more further appointments to the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel, subject to the Panel comprising no more than 5 people. This delegation has been used to appoint new members when vacancies have arisen.
- 3.2** A summary of the current IRP membership is provided below:
Janet Eustace – a former civil servant and experienced parish clerk who lives in a neighbouring district. Appointed by Council in January 2023.

Graham Russell – a registrar and former head of democratic services who serves on a number of IRPs and is based in the South West region. Appointed by the Monitoring Officer in February 2024.

Ben Russell – a human resources and payroll technology specialist who lives within the district. Appointed by the Monitoring Officer in February 2024.

Robert Gray – a human resources and pay specialist working in the aerospace industry who lives within the district. Appointed by the Monitoring Officer in July 2026.

Kathryn Taylor – a former finance professional and Independent Monitoring Board (prisons) volunteer who lives within the district. Appointed by the Monitoring Officer in July 2026.

4. FORMULATION OF A MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME FOR 2027/28

4.1 In considering its recommendations the IRP will consider the current Members' Allowances Scheme 2023-27 together with a range of information and any representations that members wish to make to the IRP directly. This information will include but not be limited to:

- a) An officer report
- b) Members' Allowances Scheme 2023-27
- c) The previous IRP report which informed the current scheme
- d) Benchmarking data with a focus on the Council's "statistical neighbours"
- e) Written or verbal representations by members

4.2 Having conducted its review, the IRP would report back to Council in early 2027 to make recommendations about the Members' Allowances Scheme 2027/28 and up to three subsequent years (if applicable).

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 There are no alternative options proposed since the Council is required to agree a new allowances scheme prior to the 2027/28 financial year, having regard to recommendations from the IRP.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications arising from the IRP's recommendations will be set out in a future report to full Council in early 2027.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The legal implications including the need to make a scheme before the start of a financial year and the need to have regard to IRP recommendations are set out in the body of the report.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 There would be risks associated with not agreeing a new Members' Allowances Scheme prior to 1 April 2028.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 There are no equalities impacts arising from this report.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no climate or ecological emergency implications arising directly from this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

(END)