

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES) TO BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

DECEMBER 2023

Introduction and Context

1. The Local Government Act, 2000 required local authorities to produce a Scheme in respect of councillors' allowances. Under the Local Government (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, Councils have to set up an independent remuneration panel to make recommendations on members' allowances.
2. The Panel comprises:

Wendy Stephenson (Chair of the Panel)

Wendy was, from 2005 to 2017 Chief Executive of VOSCUR, the support and development organisation for Bristol's voluntary and community sector. In this role, Wendy gained a good knowledge of the workings of the local authority and the roles and responsibilities of councillors. Wendy has participated in Bristol City Council assessment panels during the recruitment of senior officers and has worked with councillors and officers in a number of different policy areas.

Ronnie Alexander

Ronnie left the Civil Service in 2013 to pursue a variety of other interests including consultancy. He is currently an independent Member of Powys Teaching Health Board and a non-executive member on the Board of the Independent Monitoring Authority. Ronnie serves as Independent Chair of the Standards Committee for the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service and for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. He has a considerable record of engaging with the public, professionals and politicians at all levels, to influence policy. This follows from a civil service career spanning over 20 years and an equivalent period working in local government.

Keira Stobie

Keira has moved on from full-time classroom teaching but remains employed within the education sector and has become more involved with her voluntary interests which predominately focus on heritage, arts and working with people at either end of the age spectrum. Keira is motivated to use her experience to contribute actively to her community.

Graham Russell (Vice Chair of Panel)

Graham was the Head of Democratic Services for Bath & North East Somerset Council from 1993 to early retirement in 2005. Prior to that was a long career in local government corporate departments. He developed some expertise in the whole subject of members' allowances and was commissioned by South West Councils to produce on-line guidance on the subject for IRP members, their support officers and councillors. He is currently a marriage celebrant and a volunteer at Salford Community Association in various roles.

3. In ordinary circumstances, the Panel would, at this time, have engaged in a fundamental review of the Scheme of Allowances to ensure that it remained relevant to the way the City Council was working and adequately recognised the roles of councillors.
4. However, as a result of the Mayoral Referendum on 5th May 2022, the City Council has resolved to adopt a Committee-style of governance effective from 6th May, 2024, replacing the Directly Elected Mayor and Cabinet model currently operating. Accordingly, we have considered decisions of the Council on how it sees this new system of governance operating in detail and have made recommendations on how this might impact on member roles both within the community and in City Hall. The recommendations set out within this report are intended to be applied with effect from 6th May 2024.
5. The Panel is mindful that there is limited experience of such a large Council operating a committee model of governance. Consequently, there will be much to learn from operational experience in Bristol. The Panel is happy to work with the City Council in keeping these initial arrangements under review and is prepared to re-consider issues as and when they are referred by the Council.
6. Notwithstanding the changes in governance, the Panel has also considered the adequacy of the present Basic Allowance in the context of current and potential demands on elected councillors, including the cost of living.
7. As with all our reviews, the direct evidence from councillors is invaluable to our considerations. We are grateful for the time given by the many elected Members who took part in our survey questionnaire and/or who took the time to have face to face/virtual meetings with the Panel.
8. Finally, the Panel wishes to acknowledge the invaluable support it has received from Lucy Fleming, Head of Democratic Engagement and Tim O’Gara, Director of Legal and Democratic Services in guiding us through the many issues that we have had to consider. We are extremely fortunate to have such consistent and professional support for our work.

The Review

9. The Panel has based its review on a number of key principles as follows:
- recognising the core values of Bristol City Council as a service provider;
 - recognising that under the Committee style of governance, all members play a part in the formulation, delivery and review of policy;
 - recognising the limited operational evidence on which to base recommendations about key member roles in this style of governance;
 - the need for recommendations that did not of themselves create or perpetuate barriers to people standing or returning as a local councillor;
 - there should be a sound basis for calculating and reviewing the level of Basic Allowance for all councillors;
 - the need for recommendations on Special Responsibility Allowances that clearly distinguished those member roles that involved sufficient special characteristics (**see para 39 below**) to justify an allowance over and above the Basic Allowance;
 - recognising that while there was very little prescription in the Regulations governing members' allowances, there was statutory guidance which should be followed – and an awareness of the public's perception if this was not the case; and finally
 - the overall financial implications of implementing our recommendations were a matter for the Council to consider, on advice from Officers.

Review Methodology

10. The point has already been made that there was limited direct comparable evidence available to help the Panel in making its recommendations. We have looked at allowances in variety of Local Authorities, including the Core Cities but with a particular focus on Sheffield and Brighton and Hove Councils, both of which operate a committee style of governance.
11. An important part of the evidence base for the Panel has been to hear directly from elected councillors in Bristol. We issued a questionnaire seeking views about the level of Basic Allowance, opinions on the various member roles that a committee style of governance involves and generally on allowances and expenses. Out of a total 70 councillors we received responses from 55, an excellent return and a sound basis for collecting evidence for our review.

12. The returns have given the Panel a valuable insight into the time and effort expended by councillors in their duties and responsibilities to the electorate and to the Council both at present and in the future.
13. Included in members' comments were suggestions about how basic and special responsibility allowances should be awarded. It is important to emphasise that the Panel is only able to make recommendations within the framework of what is permitted under existing legislation. Principally, the Basic Allowance must be awarded to all members at the same level – there is no provision for variable Basic Allowances according to workload or level of commitment. Neither is there provision for any form of attendance allowance. The Panel has used special characteristics to help determine how special responsibility allowances should be awarded (see para 40).
14. It is also relevant to point out that this review has been conducted in advance of the outcome of the 2024 election. Consequently, there may be a need to review further the Scheme of Allowances once the new arrangements have been embedded.
15. As part of the review, the Panel was asked to consider a Parental Leave policy for members. This is addressed later in our report (para 117 below).

The Basic Allowance

16. The present Basic Allowance is £15,758. For comparative purposes (subject to any uplifts that will be applied for 23/24) the Sheffield allowance is £15,606 and that for Brighton and Hove £13,359. The allowances among the Core Cities range from £18,876 to £9,200.
17. According to Government Guidance issued in 2003, the purpose of the Basic Allowance is to *"recognise the time commitment of all councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers and constituents and attendance at political group meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of their homes"*.
18. In the context of modern local government, the Panel believes this description does not offer enough clarity. The Panel has identified the following as being the main aspects of a councillor's role recognised

through the Basic Allowance and has used this to inform its recommendations:

- time and effort in conducting the local representation role;
- use of home as an office/work base;
- travel within the electoral ward;
- recompense in part for the direct impact of the councillor role on the family;
- serving on such outside bodies to which the member may be appointed;
- membership of the full Council and its Committees/Sub Committees/Working Groups/Task and Finish Groups/Boards and reasonable attendance at meetings of those bodies to which the member has been appointed;
- performing a chairing or other lead role at such meetings where the time and effort involved does not equate to a chairing role for which a special responsibility is justified;
- attendance at political group meetings;
- making a contribution towards the effective governance, administration and performance review of the Council's strategies, policies and service delivery;
- attendance at a reasonable number of training and development events, including all mandatory training events;
- IT consumables (including printing, ink and paper) broadband and telephone.

19. Regarding the last point on the list at para 18, the Panel has noted that members are currently entitled to £15 per month as a separate contribution towards broadband costs. It will be seen later in this report that the Panel is recommending a robust Basic Allowance. Accordingly, the Panel believes that this separate award should in future be subsumed into the overall Basic Allowance. This would make administration easier and is a better fit for what we believe the Basic Allowance should cover.

20. **RECOMMENDATION 1: That the Council accepts the list at para 18 as being recognised through the Basic Allowance.**

21. A key part of our considerations in a routine fundamental review would be the basis on which the Basic Allowance might be indexed. That remains a relevant consideration in this current review. At present, the allowance is adjusted in accordance with the national pay award to local government

staff. The Panel feels this is a fair and reasonable basis for indexing the Basic Allowance and should therefore continue.

22. **RECOMMENDATION 2: That the present provisions of the Scheme regarding adjustments to the Basic Allowance (and consequently to other allowances) related to officer pay awards be continued and confirmed for the period up to the next fundamental review of the Scheme;**
23. **RECOMMENDATION 3: That in the event of a further flat-rate pay award to staff, the percentage applied within the award to officers' expenses be used as the basis for adjusting members' allowances.**
24. In considering the Basic Allowance, the Panel is mindful of the current financial situation facing the City Council. While the Council must consider our recommendations alongside affordability, it should be noted that our recommendations are primarily evidence based.
25. The Panel received many comments about the Basic Allowance. 90% of the 55 councillor respondents to our questionnaire felt that the number of hours worked by councillors would increase under the committee system of governance. The principal reasons put forward were:
 - increased Councillor involvement (attendance and preparation for meetings) in committees, sub committees, working groups etc. with councillors at the *"heart of the decision making process"*;
 - greater level of political group liaison prior to decision making;
 - changes in how the public interact with the Council which, it has been claimed, makes direct contact with local councillors an easier option for addressing local issues;
 - increased engagement with social media;
 - developing greater awareness of Council-wide issues in the context of decision making at committees;
 - more involvement in policy development work;
 - a shared responsibility for Committee outcomes, in an "executive" capacity.
26. Another point made clearly to us was the transient and vulnerable nature of a councillor's role with the lack of financial security and no pension provisions (this provision was removed by legislation). These points were given as examples of barriers to standing for election.

27. We have given careful consideration to all of these points. We have balanced this with a recognition that a period of operational experience would be essential to build a better picture not only of the practical impact on councillors of this governance change but also of the way the new committee structure agreed by the Council has operated.
28. In addition to comments about councillors' hours, 62% of respondents felt that the present level of Basic Allowance (£15,758) would not be sufficient to cover relevant Council work or costs from May 2024. Many also referred to the impact of the cost of living.
29. The Panel is aware that members' allowances were never intended to meet all the costs of being a councillor. Indeed, the Government has always held the position that a proportion of the hours worked by elected councillors should be un-remunerated, to reflect the public service element of the role. The majority of Panels in the South West have recommended a 30/33% reduction as appropriate to reflect this voluntary element. In Bristol however the percentage reduction used in the past has been 20%, a level which the Panel supports as a better reflection of a councillor's commitment.
30. The Panel is further aware that its recommended Basic Allowance for 2024 onwards might be judged against the present role of a councillor. The reality is that, for the first time, the Council has a clear role description for a City Councillor in a committee style of governance. It is in effect a different role to that undertaken previously in that councillors will be directly involved in decision making as well as constituency advocacy and representation. In the previous Mayor/Cabinet model, the majority of councillors had no direct role in decision making, other than at Full Council and the Regulatory Committees.
31. A fundamental issue for the Panel is to ensure that everything possible is done to create a councillor cohort that is diverse, and that the allowances Scheme does not in any way act as a barrier to inclusion. We recognise of course that, within the present legislative framework and financial parameters, the allowances Scheme alone will not fully address some of the concerns about creating diversity in the council chamber, resolving career disincentives, and achieving a better Council/ family life balance for councillors.
32. That said Bristol has come a long way in enabling diverse representation within the Council chamber and it appears that compared to data

collected in the LGA census 2022, the diversity among elected representatives is more diverse than most councils.

33. The evidence suggests that it would be reasonable to base our considerations of workload for all councillors on 25 hours per week. This was the figure used in the most recent national councillors' survey and one that has been quoted in direct evidence to us. (There will be some members in receipt of special responsibility allowances who could work considerably more hours than this.)
34. In the past, the Panel has used a local employment statistic as a basis for a formulaic approach to calculating the basic allowance. The most appropriate figure for our present purpose would be the average hourly gross pay for all employees in Bristol (full and part time) - £15.44 per hour.
35. Using this figure, and applying a 20% reduction to the total weekly hours to reflect the voluntary element of the role, the following formula arises:

$$25\text{hpw (minus 20\%)} = 20\text{hpw} \times \text{£}15.44 \text{ per hour} = \text{£}308.80 \text{ pw} \times 52 \text{ weeks} \\ = \text{£}16,058.$$

The figure was uplifted in November 23 by 3.88% in keeping with the pay award given to staff for 23/24. This produces a figure of **£16,681**

The Panel feels this is a relevant local formula with a product that will reflect our carefully considered evidence about the demands to be placed on councillors under the committee system. We emphasise again that we have heard that the role of a Councillor will change under the Committee system of governance. For the first time, the Council has produced role descriptions which we have evaluated in the context of recommending a Basic Allowance for the future.

36. **RECOMMENDATION 4: That the Basic Allowance for 2024/25 be set at £16,681.**

Special Responsibility Allowances

37. These are the allowances that are awarded to members performing key roles within the Council which have specific and significant responsibilities and/or accountabilities and/or which demand significant time and effort.
38. The Panel has applied the following principles in determining its recommendations:
 - a. the Scheme currently provides for only one SRA to be claimed by a member, even if they hold more than one role that attracts a SRA – a principle that the Panel upholds and recommends should continue;
 - b. the Panel considers the duties of a Councillor, rather than any individual's approach to the role – the production of new and clear role descriptions has helped the Panel;
 - c. a councillor receiving a robust basic allowance should reasonably be expected to undertake specific roles within the Council that are not overly demanding of time or effort (e.g. the occasional chairing role).
 - d. to qualify for a SRA, the role should satisfy a number of the special characteristics shown at para 40 below; and
 - e. some current member roles easily transfer into the new arrangements whereas others are new to the Council and may need to be assessed in due course against a period of operational experience.
39. In determining our recommendations on these allowances, we have looked at each member role, using the new role descriptions, in the context of its primary purpose, the activities related to that role (e.g. meeting officers, media management) and the special characteristics attaching to each as follows:
 - Time commitment
 - Specialist skills set
 - Functional leadership (*i.e. agenda management, prioritisation of work; public interface; focus on corporate/Council objectives*)
 - Decision making
 - Complexity of role
 - Identifiable accountability
 - Direct responsibility for important outcomes
 - Constitutional relevance

40. **RECOMMENDATION 5: That the principle that a member may only claim one SRA be continued.**

Special responsibility allowances will be calculated as multiples of the Basic Allowance. This means that there will be an automatic adjustment to these allowances as and when the Basic Allowance index is applied. This is reflected in our recommendations below.

41. The following paragraphs reflect our consideration of the various member roles.

Leader of the Council

42. The Leader of the largest political group on the Council, post-election, may be appointed by the Council as the Leader of the Council. However, there may be cross-party discussions resulting in an alternative arrangement.
43. Unlike in a Leader/Cabinet executive arrangement, the Leader will not have direct executive powers nor the power to determine decision-making arrangements. Those will be matters for the full Council, which has already put arrangements in place for implementation in 2024.
44. That said, it is clear, from the approved role description, that the Leader will hold a significant role in the political management, good governance and strategic direction both within the Council and with partner bodies/communities at local, regional and national level.
45. Allowances for the Leader in the comparator Councils of Sheffield and Brighton and Hove respectively are £26,010 and £32,505.
46. Having regard to the special criteria listed in para 39 above, it is clear that the Leader will satisfy all of these, and in particular the time commitment, leadership, accountability and responsibility.
47. **RECOMMENDATION 6: That a special responsibility allowance for the Leader of the Council be set at £33,362 (2 x Basic Allowance) for 2024/25.**

Deputy Leader of the Council

48. Unlike in an executive model of governance, there is no legal obligation to appoint a Deputy Leader for the committee model.
49. Nevertheless it is assumed that a deputy role would be required to ensure consistency in the leadership of the Council.
50. The role description for the Deputy Leader indicates a strong supporting and deputising role in all aspects of the Leader's remit. Alongside this, the deputy Leader would work with all Committee Chairs on strategic matters such as the budget and aspects of policy development.
51. The Panel believes that the position of Deputy Leader does satisfy a number of the criteria at para 39 and in particular those relating to leadership, complexity of role, accountability and time commitment. The position should therefore receive a SRA. The Panel is aware however that the role is an untested one in the context of a committee-style model of governance.
52. **RECOMMENDATION 7: That a special responsibility allowance for the Deputy Leader be set at £16,681 (1 x Basic Allowance) for 2024/25;**
53. **RECOMMENDATION 8: That this matter be kept under review and reconsidered as necessary in the light of operational experience.**

Chairs and Vice Chairs of Policy Committees

54. It was clear from evidence received that the fundamental component of the committee form of governance was the establishment of Policy Committees with decision making powers on matters within their respective remits. There will be 8 such committees in Bristol each with a remit aligned to one of the Council's corporate strategy themes.
55. Evidence offered to the Panel shows clearly that the Chairs of these Committees will provide political direction to officers and lead and develop the work programme of the Committee. They are significant posts which many consider to be the equivalent of Cabinet Members under the present governance arrangements.

56. While the Chairs will not have the same decision making powers as Cabinet Members, they will provide political steers in between meetings as necessary.
57. Much of the evidence we have received identifies the significant attendance commitment required of these chairing positions including:
- Agenda-setting meetings;
 - Chairs' and Vice Chairs' briefings;
 - Liaison meetings with other Chairs;
 - Member Forums and
 - Liaison meetings with key partner bodies.
58. It is imperative that the Policy Committee Chairs have a detailed working knowledge of their Committee's remit and also of the broader context of Council policies and strategies, including budgets. It is both an inward and outward facing role.
59. It has been suggested to the Panel that the SRA for Chairs might be set according to the size of the relevant Committee's budget. The Panel has considered this but, as the role description of the Chairs does not differentiate between the Policy Committees, we have made a single recommendation for the SRA.
60. The Panel believes that most of the criteria shown at para 39 above are present in the Chairs' role and in particular the time commitment required, functional leadership, some elements of decision making and accountability and constitutional relevance.
61. **RECOMMENDATION 9: That a special responsibility allowance for the Chairs of the Policy Committees be set at £25,022 (1.5 x Basic Allowance) for 2024/25.**
62. The Panel has heard much evidence about the robust role that the Vice Chairs of the Policy Committees will play in the governance of their Committee's business.

63. The role descriptions of both Chairs and Vice Chairs refer to ongoing consultation and association between the roles. These role descriptions identify a clear and robust role for the Vice Chairs that goes far beyond “just in case” deputising. They are for example fully involved in all briefings and agenda setting/work programming arrangements.
64. Accordingly, the Panel feels that a SRA is justified since many of the criteria at para 39 are satisfied including in particular the time commitment and elements of functional leadership when acting with or on behalf of the Chair.
65. **RECOMMENDATION 10: That a special responsibility allowance for the Vice Chairs of the Policy Committees be set at £8,341 (0.5 x Basic Allowance) for 2024/25.**

Political Group Lead Members (Group Spokespersons)

66. These members will represent the political group generally and at agenda meetings, where the group will not otherwise be represented (e.g. by the Chair or Vice Chair). They will assist the Chair and Vice Chair in the work programming of the committee.
67. Using our criteria at para 39, these members will need some understanding of the functions, policies, services and budgets of the relevant Policy Committee. There will also be a small time commitment in attending agenda setting meetings with the Chair and Vice Chair.
68. We believe however that the level of commitment involved is not particularly onerous when measured against the agreed role description. The Panel believes that the duties might be considered reasonable for a member in receipt of a robust Basic Allowance to perform without additional recognition.
69. This is a new and untested role. In the circumstances, the Panel will be happy to keep the matter under review in the light of operational experience.
70. **RECOMMENDATION 11: That no special responsibility allowance be allocated for the Political Group Lead Member/Group Spokesperson role but that the matter be kept under review in the light of operational experience.**

Political Group Leaders

71. The present Scheme of Allowances in Bristol provides an allowance for a Group Leader, (including the group whose party holds the position of Directly Elected Mayor) of £14,902. There is no limit to the number of groups. There is no allowance for a Deputy Group Leader.
72. It is clear from the role description that Group Leaders play an important part in both group management and governance of the Council, through liaison with other Leaders and senior Officers. The Panel feel that the full role of a Group Leader needs to be recognised in the Scheme.
73. While the degree of group management will vary according to group size, the role of a Leader in the governance of the Council will be the same. Their views at Group Leader meetings will hold equal relevance.
74. The Panel believes that the new committee style of governance, and the potential for more collegiate working at member level, suggests the need for a new approach to these allowances. Accordingly, the Panel wishes to put forward the following balanced approach for consideration which offers equal recognition of the governance role, supplemented by a group management role graded according to group size:

Group Leader	Governance Element (30% BA)	74% + (52+ members) (100% BA)	73% - 51% (51-36 members) (75% BA)	50%- 31% (35-22 members) (50% BA)	30%- 15% (21 – 11 members) (25% BA)	14% - 4% (10 – 3 members) (12.5% BA)	Less than 4% (2 members) (0% BA)	Total
Leader of Group	£5,004	£16,681						£21,685
Leader of Group	£5,004		£12,511					£17,515
Leader of Group	£5,004			£8,341				£13,345
Leader of Group	£5,004				£4,170			£9,174
Leader of Group	£5,004					£2,085		£7,089
Leader of Group	£5,004						£0	£5,004

75. It should be noted that the Leader of the Council is a separate position to the Group Leader, and providing those posts are held by different individuals they can both receive the relevant special responsibility allowance.
76. The Panel believes this is a fairer and more balanced way to recognise the commitment of all Group Leaders to the good governance of the Council together with the variable workload of group management roles which does relate directly to group size. This approach can be applied against whatever form of political administration is in operation.
77. **RECOMMENDATION 12: That the special responsibility allowances for Political Group Leaders be determined in future in accordance with the above table, effective from 2024/25.**
78. **RECOMMENDATION 13: That in the light of the indication that the Group Whip role is to continue (see para 81 below), there be no special responsibility allowance set for a Deputy Group Leader.**

Political Group Whips

79. It has been the culture in Bristol for political groups to appoint Whips to help with the effective management of the Group. These member roles also provide an important link with the Officers in managing logistical matters for Council meetings. In evidence it is clear that this role is valued highly in providing an important liaison between the group and senior officers. In addition, while there is a full role description for the group Whip role, there is no such role description set for a Deputy Group Leader (see Recommendation 13 above).
80. Of particular interest to the Panel is their role in providing pastoral support to members of the Group. The need for such support was identified during the evidence gathering stage of the review.
81. The Panel believes that the role will carry some considerable importance and a special responsibility allowance is therefore justified, particularly with regard to the time commitment and complexity of the role. It is however felt appropriate to apply the same approach to this role as has been recommended for Group Leaders i.e. recognising both the

governance role and group size – as set out in the table below. In broad terms the totals represent close to half of the Group Leaders’ allowances.

Group Whip	Governance Element (15% of BA)	74% + (52+ members) (50% of Group Leader)	73% - 51% (51-36 members) (50% of Group Leader)	50% - 31% (35-22 members) (50% of Group Leader)	30%=15% (21-11 members) (50% of Group Leader)	14% - 4% (10 – 3 members) (50% of Group Leader)	Less than 4% (2 members)	Total
Group Whip	£2,502	£8,340						£10,842
Group Whip	£2,502		£6,255					£8,757
Group Whip	£2,502			£4,170				£6,672
Group Whip	£2,502				£2,085			£4,587
Group Whip	£2,502					£1,043		£3,545
Group Whip	£2,502						£0	£2,502

82. **RECOMMENDATION 14: That the special responsibility allowance for the Political Group Whips be determined according to the table at para 81 above for 2024/25.**

Regulatory Committee Chairs

83. The present Scheme makes provision for special responsibility allowances as follows:

Chair Audit Committee - £7,452

Chair Planning Committee (DC) - £7,452

Chair Licensing – Nil but sliding scale of allowances for member attendances

Chair Public Safety and Protection (PSP) - £7,452

Chair Human Resources Committee - £7,452

84. The Panel has not received any direct representation in respect of these allowances other than to confirm that the special arrangements introduced for Licensing members are working well. We have had evidence that a similar approach might usefully be adopted for members of the sub-committee of the Public Safety and Protection Committee which hears taxi and other licence/permit cases. The parent Committee does not meet regularly but the sub-committee does.

85. The Panel is therefore minded to propose that the special responsibility allowance for the Chair of the Public Safety and Protection Committee be removed from the Scheme and that a similar arrangement to that operating for Licensing members is put in place.
86. Of particular relevance to the Panel is the effective management of risk to the Council on planning matters and the role that the Chair must play in the proper conduct of meetings and the relevance of their decisions within the planning framework.
87. Although we have not received any representations relating to the Chairs of the Audit and Human Resources Committees, the Panel believes it is right to maintain the parity of allowance with the Chair of Planning.
88. In all cases, and using our special criteria at para 39, the Regulatory chairing role will have elements of time commitment, but complexity and specialist skills will be key criteria.
89. **RECOMMENDATION 15: That a special responsibility allowance for the Chairs of Planning, Human Resources and Audit Committees be set at £8,341 (0.5 x Basic Allowance) for 2024/25.**
90. **RECOMMENDATION 16: That the present arrangements for payment to Licensing Committee members be continued as follows:**

£150 for 2 sessions and that a similar arrangement be introduced for hearings under the auspices of the Public Safety and Protection Committee;
91. **RECOMMENDATION 17: That accordingly, no special responsibility allowance be allocated for the Chair of the Public Safety and Protection Committee.**

The Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor

92. Not to be confused with the Directly Elected Mayor, which is to be discontinued, the Lord Mayor of Bristol is an historic civic office representing the City as First Citizen at a significant number of civic and ceremonial occasions in a year. The Lord Mayor also acts as the Chair of the City Council.
93. The Scheme provides allowances as follows:
- Lord Mayor £24,837
Deputy Lord Mayor £7,452
94. We have noted that there is in addition a small separate budget to cover a clothing allowance for the Lord Mayor of £1,500.
95. The time commitment involved in the Lord Mayor role is significant and satisfies our criteria. The Deputy Lord Mayor can also be required to undertake a broad range of engagements throughout the year. Therefore, the Panel opt to retain the current allowances for both of these positions but may wish to look at this in more detail in a future review.
96. **RECOMMENDATION 18: That a special responsibility allowance for the Lord Mayor of Bristol be set at £25,022 (1.5 x Basic Allowance) for 2024/25.**
97. **RECOMMENDATION 19: That a special responsibility allowance for the Deputy Lord Mayor be set at £8,341 (0.5 x Basic Allowance) for 2024/25.**

Chair, Standing Finance Sub Committee

98. The Panel has noted the intention to establish a standing Finance Sub Committee of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee. We understand this will be the body that formulates the budget recommendations to the full Council and monitors its implementation.
99. It is conceivable that this Sub Committee may be chaired by a senior member already in receipt of an SRA in another capacity. Nevertheless, the Panel believes the Scheme should show clearly that this role satisfies a number of our criteria for awarding such an allowance, including important outcomes, constitutional relevance and time commitment.

100. It is noted that the workloads of Members sitting on the Finance Sub Committee (and/or Strategy and Resources Policy Committee), may be significant. Therefore, the Panel will keep this under review and may recommend additional payments in the future.

101. **RECOMMENDATION 20: That a special responsibility allowance for the Chair of the Finance Sub Committee be set at £12,511, (0.75 x Basic Allowance) for 2024/25.**

Chair, Health Sub Committee

102. Health Scrutiny remains a statutory requirement of the Council under its committee style model of governance. This includes the important liaison role with other health agencies, partner bodies and environmental health, calling them to account as required.

103. We believe this chairing role will need to develop clear leadership and subject-related skills and should receive an allowance not dissimilar to those that apply to Scrutiny Commission Chairs under the current arrangements.

104. **RECOMMENDATION 21: That a special responsibility allowance for the Chair of the Health Sub Committee be set at £8,341 (0.5 x Basic Allowance) for 2024/25.**

105. As a general point, the Panel wishes to remind those who read this report that there remains in place a one-member-one SRA rule. This means that it is unlikely that all the SRAs proposed in this report will be taken up. There is also the need to be mindful that if more than 50% of councillors on an authority receive a SRA, they cease to be special and the public might be rightly sceptical.

Chairs of Task and Finish Groups

106. The Panel understands that it is the intention to continue to enable the Policy Committees to convene Task and Finish Groups to examine particular issues in depth and to report to the parent committee. This continues an arrangement under the current overview and scrutiny system.

107. The present Scheme provides that the Chair of such Groups will be entitled to a special responsibility allowance of £2,000 once the final report of the group is submitted to the parent committee. For clarification, this payment can only be made to Councillors not already in receipt of another special responsibility allowance.
108. The Panel believes this has worked well and proposes therefore to continue the allowance arrangement under the new Policy Committee system.
109. **RECOMMENDATION 22: That a special responsibility allowance of £2,000 be set for the Chair of a Task and Finish Group established under a Policy Committee, once the Group’s final report has been submitted to the parent committee.**

Overall Comparisons between Present and Proposed Schemes

110. The table below shows how the cost of our proposals differs from that for the present system of governance (using the BA of £16,681).

Role	Present	Total	Proposed	Total
Basic Allowance x70	£15,758	£1,103,060	£16,681	£1,167,670
Directly Elected Mayor x1	£73,973	£73,973	-	-
Deputy Mayor x2	£29,378	£58,756	-	-
Cabinet Members x 7	£27,118	£189, 826	-	-
Leader 2xBA	-	-	£33,362	£33,362
Deputy Leader 1x BA	-	-	£16,681	£16,681
Policy Committee Chairs x 7 1.5BA (note – one SRA removed as it will be chaired by the Leader)	-	-	£25,022	£175,154
Policy Committee	-	-	£8,341	£66,728

Vice Chairs x8 0.5BA				
Lord Mayor x1 1.5BA	£24,837	£24,837	£25,022	£25,022
Deputy Lord Mayor x1 0.5BA	£7,452	£7,452	£8,341	£8,341
Political Group Leaders x5	£14,902	£74,525	£47,957 (based on the 23/24 group size)	£47,957
Political group Whips x5 0.55BA	£9,040	£45,200	£23,978 (based on the 23/24 group size)	£23,978
Chairs of Scrutiny Commissions x 4	£7,452	£29,808	-	-
Chair of Audit Committee x1 0.5BA	£7,452	£7,452	£8,341	£8,341
Chair of DC Committees x2 0.5BA	£7,452	£14,904	£8,341	£16,682
Chair of PS&P Committee x1 0.5BA	£7,452	£7,452	£8341 (estimate)	£8341 (estimate)
Licensing Sub Committee hearings	£7,452 (estimate)	£7,452 (estimate)	£8341 (estimate)	£8341 (estimate)
Chair of HR Committee x1	£7,452	£7,452	£8,341	£8,341
OSMB Chair x1	£9,040	£9,040	-	-
Chair Standing Finance Sub Cttee x1 0.75BA	-	-	£12,511	£12,511
Chair Health Sub Committee x1 0.5BA	£7,452	£7,452	£8,341	£8,341
		£1,668,641		£1,635, 791
Difference				-£32,850

(It should be noted that this table contains some speculation regarding the number of formal Political Groups that will be formed after the May 24 whole Council elections and consequently the number of group-related member roles.)

Travel and Subsistence

111. The Panel has received evidence that the introduction of the bus pass provision for councillors and the car parking permits have both been well supported and are proving of benefit to councillors. These should continue.
112. Of less relevance is the mileage payment provision which has not been taken up.
113. **RECOMMENDATION 23: That the present travel and subsistence provisions within the Scheme be continued with the exception of the mileage payments which should be deleted.**

Dependent Care and Child Support

114. The Panel is aware that there is very little take up of the expenses provisions available to councillors in support of child care costs and specialist disability care costs. The Panel has been anxious to consider what barriers might exist that prevent or discourage councillors from claiming their entitlements. Members' comments on this have been helpful.
115. This appears to be an issue across the south west region and one that a number of Independent Panels are reviewing.
116. The Panel is keeping the matter under review but in the meantime wishes to recommend the continuation of the Scheme's current provisions.
117. **RECOMMENDATION 24: That the present provisions relating to expenses for all forms of dependent care support be continued pending further review.**

Parental Leave Policy

118. The Panel understands that the Council is considering adopting a Parental Leave policy setting out members' entitlements in relation to basic allowance and special responsibility allowances.

119. Although not wholly within our brief, the Panel does support the introduction of such a policy. Of particular relevance to us is that members are clear about the extent to which their entitlement to allowances continues during periods of such leave.
120. Using models that have been considered elsewhere, the Panel supports the approach that Basic Allowance continues in full during approved periods of parental leave.
121. A phased withdrawal of a special responsibility allowance is also considered helpful.
122. The Panel has noted that there does not exist, within the region, any policy relating to fostering leave. While this again is not a matter of direct relevance to us, we intend to examine this further only in the context of our ongoing concerns about the barriers that exist to members standing for or remaining as councillors.
- 123. RECOMMENDATION 25: That the Council notes the Panel's support for a clear parental leave policy relating to councillors and notes in particular the points raised above about the payment of allowances under such a policy.**

Conclusions

124. This has been a challenging review in a number of ways. The Panel, like the Council, has been familiar with the executive style of working and has had to adapt its considerations to accommodate new aspects of a councillor's role.
125. Much of the evidence is based on presumption about these roles, without the benefit of operational experience.
126. In this context, the Panel intends to conduct a review of the revised scheme of allowances after the Committee system has been operational for approximately 12 months. This may lead to recommendations to either increase or reduce allowances.
127. Our recommendations are all evidence based and for this we are extremely grateful to all the councillors and officers who have supported our work.

128. I make particular mention of the Committee Model Working Group which has shaped the new structure. We have enjoyed unprecedented access to information about their work and to their conclusions.
129. Thanks are due to the Independent Remuneration Panel members for their commitment to this process and diligence and judgement in the production of this report.
130. Finally, I commend these recommendations in the hope that they together form a sound framework for councillors in their new and continuing roles within the Council.

Wendy Stephenson
Chair of the Panel

November, 2023