

26. Councillors' allowances

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26.1 Basic allowance

Each councillor gets a basic allowance of £5,471 p.a.

26.2 Allowance reductions

Council has collectively agreed that councillors will forgo part of their future allowance payments in the following circumstances:

- (a) A 15% reduction will be applied for councillors who attend less than two thirds of the scheduled meetings required within a Special Responsibility (26.3).
- (b) A 15% reduction will be applied for:
 - (i) Members who fail to attend more than four meetings of Council in the municipal year except when a serious medical condition is the reason for absence;
 - (ii) Members who fail to attend an induction for newly elected councillors. A newly elected councillor is any councillor who was not holding City Council office at the time of the election in question.
- (c) A 10% reduction from future allowances will be applied for:
 - (i) Members who fail to attend compulsory planning and development control training (held every two years).
 - (ii) Members who fail to attend compulsory code of conduct training (held annually).
 - (iii) Members who are appointed to a Licensing Committee who fail to attend compulsory licensing training (held annually).

Attendance at meetings for the purposes of 26.2(a) and (b)(i) will be based on the public attendance records for Council, Cabinet and committee meetings (as

appropriate) at the end of the municipal year and any reductions will be applied for the duration of the subsequent municipal year for those councillors continuing to hold the relevant office or special responsibility. Shareholder meetings will be excluded from the requirements of 26.2(a).

Attendance at training for the purposes of 26.2(b)(ii) and (c) will be based on the attendance records held by the Head of Law and Governance. Any reductions will be applied from the date of the last training or induction session offered in a municipal year for the remainder of the municipal year.

Members' personal circumstances, including health, will be taken into account by the Head of Law & Governance in consultation with the Committee & Member Services Manager before any allowance reduction is applied.

26.3 Special responsibility allowances

Some Councillors get special responsibility allowances:

Special Responsibility	Allowance	Cash amount
Leader	3 x basic allowance	£16,413
Deputy leader	1 x basic allowance	£5,471
Non-Statutory Deputy Leader	1 x basic allowance	£5,471
Lord Mayor	1 x basic allowance	£5,471
Deputy Lord Mayor	0.25 x basic allowance	£1,368
Sheriff	0.25 x basic allowance	£1,368
Cabinet member with particular responsibilities given by the Leader (including Leader and Deputy Leader if they hold particular responsibilities)	1.5 x basic allowance	£8,207
Chair of Scrutiny Committee	1 x basic allowance	£5,471
Chair of Audit and Governance Committee	0.25 x basic allowance	£1,368
Chair of a Planning Committee	0.5 x basic allowance	£2,736
Leader of an opposition group	1 x basic allowance	£5,471 Divided equally among opposition groups
Scrutiny Standing Panel Chair	0.25 x basic allowance	£1,368 Maximum of 2 Standing Panel SRAs available. Panel must meet at least 5 times to qualify. If more Standing Panels are set up then 0.5 x basic allowance (£2,736) to be divided between the Panel Chairs

No one can have more than two special responsibility allowances. Special responsibility allowances for the Civic Office Holders are not included in this rule. If a councillor has more than two special responsibilities, they will get the allowances for the two special responsibilities that pay the most.

Where a councillor is also a member of another Council, that councillor may not receive allowances from more than one Council, in respect of the same duties.

26.4 Co-optees and Independent Persons allowance

Co-opted members and Independent Persons may claim an allowance of £75 for up to 4 hours and £150 for more than 4 hours but less than 24 hours in respect of any Committee, Sub-Committee or Panel meeting attendance of which they are a member.

26.5 Choosing not to be paid a basic or special responsibility allowance

A councillor may elect to forego any part of their entitlement to an allowance under this scheme by providing written notice to the Monitoring Officer.

26.6 Repayment of allowances

Where allowances have been paid in advance for a period during which a councillor no longer holds a role to which an SRA applies or is no longer a councillor, those allowances will be repaid.

26.7 Maternity, Paternity, Adoption or Parental Leave

Any councillor wishing to take a period of maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave will continue to receive the basic allowance. For a period of non-attendance at qualifying meetings to extend beyond six months full council would first need to grant a special dispensation under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Where a qualifying councillor in receipt of a special responsibility allowance wishes to take a leave of absence from the duties for which they receive the special responsibility allowance due to maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave it will be at the discretion of the councillor affected to determine whether they wish to temporarily step down from their role. If so, they can receive maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave payments equivalent to half of the special responsibility allowance(s) to which they are entitled for a period of up to six months. Only Councillors who have been in receipt of a special responsibility for at least three months before the date their leave of absence commences will qualify for maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave payments in respect of that special responsibility. These payments are not contingent on the councillor being re-appointed to their previous role(s) at the end of their period of absence.

An application should be made to the Monitoring Officer for maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave payments during a period of absence from a special responsibility and the affected member will have to relinquish all relevant duties and responsibilities to their replacement member for the full duration of the cover period. They may however continue to pass on knowledge to their replacement member on an informal basis and this contribution is recognised by the payment

of reduced allowances during a period of maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave for up to six months. Any member choosing to step down from the Cabinet to take a period of absence will no longer be a member of the Cabinet until such time as they are re-appointed to the Cabinet. Membership of the Cabinet is limited to ten councillors.

26.8 Allowances for child and other dependants' care

Councillors can claim for the actual costs incurred by them in making arrangements for the care of children or other dependants to attend:

- Council
- The Cabinet
- Any Council committee or sub-committee
- Any outside bodies the Council has appointed them to
- Conferences and seminars agreed by the Head of Law and Governance
- Meetings with directors or officers agreed by the Head of Law and Governance
- Any other events agreed by the Head of Law and Governance

Councillors can claim the actual cost of this care as long as the carer has been paid at least the Oxford Living Wage and invoices/receipts are provided. Where the carer is employed at a level below the Oxford Living Wage the councillor can still claim if they provide evidence of making top up payments to the provider up to the level of the Oxford Living Wage.

The maximum that any member can claim for carers' allowances in any financial year is £1,306. This figure will increase annually in line with the rate of increase in the Oxford Living Wage. In special circumstances this level may be increased by the Head of Law and Governance after consultation with the Committee and Member Services Manager.

26.9 Allowances for travel

No travel allowance will be paid for journeys inside the City of Oxford boundary other than those agreed in advance by the Monitoring Officer as a reasonable adjustment for a councillor with a permanent or temporary disability (26.10) or as an exemption for a councillor with a low income. Travel allowances will only be available for the following events, agreed in advance, which take place outside of the city boundary:

- Conferences and seminars agreed by the Head of Law and Governance
- Meetings with directors or officers agreed by the Head of Law and Governance
- Any other events agreed by the Head of Law and Governance.

Any claims relating to events taking place outside the Oxford city boundary should be agreed in advance and be in line with the staff rates for travel allowances. Best

use should be made at all times of travel concessions arranged by the Committee and Member Services Team.

Councillors are encouraged to make the right choices about travelling on business, including consideration of whether a journey is really necessary. Walking and cycling are encouraged where possible, as these are the most carbon and cost efficient methods of travel; followed by public transport.

Reimbursement for travel outside the UK will not be allowed with the exception of pre-arranged events for the Lord Mayor which will be limited to two trips per year for the Lord Mayor, or representative, and consort.

Any additional requests from the civic office holders will be dealt with by the Head of Law and Governance. Any agreement would then be subject to the availability of a budget to pay for the travel.

A councillor may apply to the Head of Law and Governance for a maximum of £1,000 per year (1 April to 31 March) to allow for additional expenses if they are unemployed or on a low income and affordability is a barrier to them performing their role as a councillor. This could include travel expenses for council business within the city of Oxford boundary. In assessing claims the Head of Law and Governance will review the councillor's Register of Interests and may request further documentation such as proof of ongoing entitlement to working age benefits (other than Child Benefit). Councillors' entitlement to these allowances would be reviewed annually and councillors would be expected to inform the Head of Law and Governance if they stopped receiving a qualifying benefit.

26.10 Reasonable adjustments

A councillor may apply to the Monitoring Officer for a maximum of £1,000 per year (1 April to 31 March) to allow reasonable adjustments to be made to meet their needs should they have a temporary or permanent disability.

The Monitoring Officer has the discretion to increase the amount available to each qualifying councillor appropriate to their requirements if necessary.

26.11 How to claim allowances

Councillors do not have to submit claims for the basic and special responsibility allowances. These are paid automatically, in 12 instalments in line with the corporate payment schedule set by the Council's payroll team.

Councillors need to submit claims for care and travel on the forms provided. These should be accompanied by receipts/invoices and must be sent to the Committee and Members' Services Manager. Claims for care, and travel will only be paid if they are made within two months of the meeting (unless the Head of Law and Governance agrees there is a good reason for the delay). Councillors are paid in line with the corporate payment schedule set by the Council's payroll team.

26.12 Indexing of allowances in the scheme

Councillor's basic allowances will increase annually from 01 April 2024 onwards at the same rate as the percentage cost of living uplift in the local pay settlement for local government employees for that year.

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