



# **A Guide to the Members' Allowances Scheme and Other Assistance**

**May 2023**

## Members Allowances Scheme and Other Assistance

This section provides Councillors with a clear guide to the Members' Allowances Scheme and other provisions and facilities to ensure that there is clarity and avoidance of doubt and to prevent inconsistency in application.

### **EFFECTIVE FROM 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 (figures to be uplifted should an NJC Pay Award be agreed for 2023-2024)**

Stevenage Borough Council has made the following Members' Allowances scheme under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

#### **1. The Scheme**

This scheme may be cited as the Stevenage Borough Council Members' Allowances Scheme and shall have effect for the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

#### **2. Councillor**

In this scheme, "Councillor" means a Member of the Stevenage Borough Council who is a Councillor; "year" means the period ending on 31 March 2024.

#### **3. Basic Allowance**

A basic allowance shall be paid to each Councillor from 1 April 2023.

#### **4. Special Responsibility Allowances**

- 1) For each year a special responsibility allowance shall be paid to those Councillors who hold the special responsibilities in relation to the authority that are specified in the schedule to this scheme.
- 2) Subject to paragraph 6, (part year entitlements) the amount of each such allowance shall be the amount specified against that special responsibility in that schedule.
- 3) Members are only able to claim one SRA.

#### **5. Renunciation**

A Councillor may by notice in writing to the Chief Executive elect to forego any part of their entitlement to an allowance under this scheme.

#### **6. Part-year Entitlements**

Payment of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances will be pro-rata where Councillors do not serve for a full year on the Council.

#### **7. Payments**

Payments shall be made on a regular monthly basis. Claims for dependent carer's allowances and travel and subsistence allowance shall be made within two months of being incurred.

## 8. Suspension of Payments

The Council will withhold all allowances to any Councillor who is suspended for misconduct and will require Councillors to repay any allowance already paid during a period of suspension.

## 9. Basic Allowances

Basic Allowance	Paid to All Members	£8,490
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## 10. Special Responsibility Allowances

(i) Leader of the Council	£23,831
(ii) Executive Members	£11,671
(iii) Chair of Planning and Development Committee	£11,671
(iv) Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee	£10,481
(v) Chair of Licensing Committee	£4,767
(vi) Chairs of Select Committees	£5,958
(vii) Chair of Audit Committee	£4,767
(viii) Leader of the Opposition	£4,767
(ix) Leader of minority opposition party(ies)	£1,631

## 11. Payment to Specific Co-opted Members

Independent Member - Audit Committee	£1,441
Independent person who must be consulted on alleged breaches of a code of conduct	£1,441

## 12. Carer's Allowance

The following amounts may be claimed for Councillors attending approved duties.

Childcare	Maximum of £11.90 per hour
Dependent care	Maximum of £27.20 per hour

Payment to relatives that live in the same household as the Councillor will not be admissible and there will be a maximum allowance of 20 hours per month. Receipts will need to be provided.

## 13. Travel, Subsistence and Other Allowances

The allowances for travel and subsistence will be the same as those fixed for employees of the Council from time to time. Claims to be submitted within 2 months of the date to which they relate.

## 14. Variations

The Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances detailed above are index linked to any pay awards applicable to NJC staff that may be agreed for 2023-2024.

## 15. PCs, Laptops, Tablets etc.

The cost of purchasing computer hardware, software, consumables, broadband connection, and all other telecommunications related costs is covered by the Basic Allowance paid to all Members. IT Service Desk can provide you with a laptop which is chargeable.

The Council's E. Government and Business Systems Unit provides Members with support in identifying appropriate network solutions, hardware and software; installation of hardware and software; fault diagnosis and resolution; and training. A dedicated, unique email address is supplied together with access to the Council's systems.

Councillors may use PCs in the Civic Suite for official Council business.

It should be noted however that the Council is paperless for its committee meeting etc. You will be updated on any developments in this area.

## 16. Car Park Season Tickets\*

Car park season tickets, for use when visiting the Town Centre or Old Town on official Council business, are issued to Members on request. On receipt of a season ticket Members are asked sign a form acknowledging the limitations on use. Personal use of season tickets is not permitted and may jeopardise the tax free status of this facility.

*\* A list of 'Council Business' for which claims may be made under the Scheme is set out at paragraph 26.*

## 17. Hotel Accommodation / Overnight Expenses

Provision for hotel accommodation / overnight expenses when on official Council business is in line with that allowed for Council employees.

When required to stay overnight somewhere on Council business, accommodation should be booked in advance through Members' Services. Note: Accommodation will be no more than four-star rated.

Where meals are provided in the cost of the accommodation, claims will not be entertained for alternative meals, for example, if breakfast is provided in the accommodation cost, an additional claim for breakfast would not be paid. Otherwise the subsistence allowance, as detailed in the Members' Allowances Scheme, see section 1 above, may be claimed.

The costs of any personal items or services purchased, for example, newspapers, snacks from the mini bar, will not be reimbursed, nor will the purchase of alcoholic drinks.

Travel costs to and from the venue are covered by the Members' Allowances Scheme, see section 1 above. Reimbursement will not be paid for any travel costs incurred whilst staying away from home unless the trip is made as part of official business undertaken.

## **18. Conferences and Courses**

Requests for Members to attend any outside conference or course is forwarded to the Leader for approval. Members are required to complete a request form, available on the internet or from Constitutional Services (Members' Services), provide details of the course or conference (organiser, subject matter, venue, and cost) and their personal objectives in attending the event. If approved, the Member is notified and attendance is to be booked and arranged by the Members' Services Section so that any related expenditure may be accounted for centrally.

The relevant sections concerning travel, subsistence and hotel accommodation / overnight expenses, set out elsewhere in this guide, will apply as appropriate.

## **19. Hospitality**

The Members' Code of Conduct requires Councillors to declare any gifts or hospitality with an estimated value of £50 or more. Such declarations should be made in writing to the Constitutional Services Manager who will forward it to the Council's Monitoring Officer for review.

## **20. Members' Library**

The Members' Library is situated in the Civic Suite and is for use by Councillors only. There are two PCs, telephone and tea and coffee facilities for your use.

There is a small reference library and copies of recent agendas and other publications are available together with the Municipal Journal and Local Government Chronicle. No other periodicals or newspapers are purchased as in the main; these can be viewed online.

As this room is a facility for all Members, it should not be used for meetings.

## **21. Group Rooms**

Each political Group has their own small room for meetings, use of telephone, PCs etc.

## **22. The In / Out Board**

In the Members' Services Office (Room 158) there is an In / Out Board with the name of each Councillor listed. If you are in Daneshill House during the day for longer than a few minutes you are asked to visit the office and indicate on the Board that you are 'in' and your whereabouts around Daneshill (please change the Board to 'out' before you leave). Members may also jot down messages on the board and details of holiday dates etc. will be displayed.

Members are asked to provide Members' Services with their planned holiday dates.

## **23. Members' Expenses – Record Keeping**

Constitutional Services maintain an electronic record of allowances paid and both expenses claimed personally by individual Members and expenditure incurred on their behalf, for example, travel warrants or accommodation. At any time individual members may request a copy of their own record of expenditure.

Details are published on the Council's website at the end of each quarter.

## 24. Parental Leave

At the Council meeting in February 2019, the Council agreed to introduce a Parental Leave Policy for Councillors, which is shown in **Appendix 5** in the Induction Guide.

## 25. Mayoral Activities

The allowance paid to the Mayor is not included within the formal published Member's Allowances Scheme. The 2023/24 budget includes provision for the Mayor's Allowance and Hospitality Budget.

The Mayor's Allowance is £14,540 per annum, paid monthly on a pro-rata basis and is subject to tax and National Insurance, where appropriate. This allowance covers all incidental expenses incurred on Mayoral engagements, such as raffle tickets and collections. Members' Services holds a budget of up to £10,000 per Mayoral term of office for use for hospitality and arranging events. The Mayor will be provided with details of expenditure and commitment against this budget on a monthly basis.

The Deputy Mayor receives an Allowance of £5,810 per annum, also paid monthly on a pro-rata basis and is also subject to tax and National Insurance, where appropriate. It should be noted however, that the rule in relation to an individual only receiving one Special Responsibility Allowance (see section 1 b. above) applies.

It is accepted that a Mayor and Mayoress/Consort may, from time to time, need to purchase appropriate clothing to undertake their mayoral duties. The Mayor may claim up to £1,500 over their term of office. Reimbursement for individual expenditure will be paid on production of a relevant receipt(s). No more than £250 will be reimbursed for any one garment or suit.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor are expected to self-drive to and from engagements. However, the personal circumstances of individuals holding the office of Mayor/Deputy Mayor will be taken into consideration and when it is considered that self-drive is not appropriate a taxi or hire car may be provided. The Mayor may claim mileage for attending engagements. Whilst mileage is claimed and calculated in the same way as mileage claimed under the Members' Allowances Scheme, payment for mileage for mayoral engagements is not accounted for as part of that Scheme.

It is advised that 'Occasional Business Use' must be included on the car insurance of the Mayor/Deputy Mayor (or Mayoress'/Consort's) as appropriate). Any additional premium incurred may be reimbursed by the Council.

## 26. Categories of 'Business'

The categories of business for which travelling, and subsistence allowances may be claimed are set out in the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 – Section 8. These categories also apply to use of the car parking season ticket.

Under the provisions of Section 8 (1) (a) (b) (c) & (d) Travel and Subsistence Claims may be submitted following the attendance at any of the following:

- Council

- The Executive and formally appointed Sub-Committees thereof
- All Committees, Sub-Committees and Joint bodies listed in the Constitution
- Outside Bodies to which appointments are made by Council

Under the provisions of Section 8 (1) (h) the following are recognised as approved duties for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the authority or any of its Committees:

- Modern Member Activities and formal Member training
- All Member Seminars
- Approved Conferences and Seminars
- Scrutiny site visits
- Informal meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees
- Meetings convened by the Council, Committee or Panel, or by a Chief Officer, provided that members from at least 2 political groups are invited
- Attendance by an Executive Member, or Chair or Vice-Chair of a Committee or Scrutiny Body at discussions with officers in connection with duties arising from those appointments, including briefings
- Group Meetings when discussing Council Business
- Group Leaders (including Deputy Leaders when deputising) meeting with officers for the purpose of dealing with Council business
- Attendance by an Executive Member for the purposes of undertaking the business of the Council and to represent the Council
- Attendance at formal engagements where a Member has been invited by position
- Attendance at a meeting of any body, or of any Committee or Sub-Committee thereof, where a member is appointed by the Council, or through the Regional or National political process
- Attendance at Councillors surgeries