

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES SCHEME

INTRODUCTION

All Councillors and some co-opted members are entitled to receive certain allowances in recognition of their various duties and responsibilities.

Allowances are payable under the powers of Section 100 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7 of Part 2 of the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

Exeter City Council's Member Allowances scheme was comprehensively reviewed in March 2001 and the level of allowances has been updated annually since that time on the advice of an Independent Panel. The scheme agreed in 2001, on which the current scheme is based, assumed a minimum requirement of Councillors of four days per month ie 48 days for the year, of which 16 (one third) was regarded as a voluntary element.

The attached schedule (Appendix 1) sets out the rate of allowances that apply to the current year.

BASIC AND SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES

There are two main types of allowance relating to work as a Councillor:-

- (i) **Basic Allowance** - this is a fixed sum paid in recognition of the time spent on work as a Councillor, including meetings with constituents and incidental costs such as the use of the telephone and postage for Council business. This is paid in arrears in equal monthly instalments to the Councillor's bank or building society account.
- (ii) **Special Responsibility Allowances** - these are payable monthly to Councillors having extra responsibilities over and above those expected of most members, such as the Leader of the Council, the Executive members and chairs of certain other Committees. Any member qualifying for more than one special responsibility allowance will be paid the higher allowance only.

The rate of allowances is normally updated on an annual basis in line with the pay award for Local Authority staff for the preceding year.

OTHER ALLOWANCES

Exeter City Council is keen to attract and retain as wide a range of Councillors as possible and understands that some Councillors such as those with caring responsibilities may require additional support or incur increased costs in the course of carrying out their duties.

In order to offset such expenses, the Council pays **Dependants' Carers' Allowance** whereby members can be reimbursed for the actual cost of care when a carer for a

dependent has been engaged to enable a Councillor to attend a Committee meeting or other qualifying duty.

An hourly rate equivalent to the minimum wage (for adult workers aged 22 and above) may be claimed in respect of expenses incurred by a Councillor when a carer for a dependent has been engaged to enable a councillor to carry out an approved duty. Qualifying duties are defined as meetings of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees, training events, briefings and such other duties as are specified by the relevant regulations.

A carer will be any responsible person who does not normally live with the councillor as part of that councillor's family.

An allowance will be payable if the dependant being cared for:

- is a child under the age of 14
- is an elderly person; or
- has a recognised physical or mental disability

who normally lives with the councillor as part of that councillor's family and should not be left unsupervised.

For meetings or duties within the Council's boundaries, the allowance will be paid for the duration of the meeting or otherwise approved duty plus an allowance for up to one hour's total travelling time before and after the meeting.

Claim forms can be obtained from Member Services and should be submitted within two months of the date of the approved duty.

METHOD OF PAYMENT

Allowances are payable via the Council's computerised payroll system. Shortly after election, new Councillors will be requested to complete a form giving details of their bank or building society account to which payments will be credited, to be returned to the Human Resources Unit. Allowances cannot be paid until Councillors have completed this form. If Councillors change any of their personal details during their term of office e.g. bank account or address, they must notify Payroll or Member Services immediately.

CO-OPTED/INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Certain co-opted /independent members of the Council are entitled to receive expenses in recognition of the work they undertake on behalf of the Council.

Expenses are currently payable to:

- independent members of the Standards Committee
- members of the Independent Panel on Councillors Remuneration

RENUNCIATION

A Councillor or co-opted Member who wishes to waive their right to claim all or any part of their entitlement to an allowance should write to the Chief Executive to confirm their intention to do so.

EXPENSES

Travel and subsistence allowances are payable in respect of approved duties such as attendance at meetings outside the city where you are representing the Council, attendance at courses and conferences and similar events. This will generally be paid at the same rate as applies to Exeter City Council employees and be subject to the same requirements for claims.

Council policy is that public transport should be used wherever possible when on Council business but if this is not practicable mileage is payable in respect of travel undertaken by car. Councillors will not be able to claim expenses in respect of journeys to and from the Civic Centre or for going about normal Council business around the City.

It is an Audit requirement that receipts for all expenses e.g. petrol, car parking, bus, underground, taxi fares and refreshments must be obtained and submitted with any claim. Reimbursement cannot be claimed for purely personal expenses such as private phone calls, alcoholic beverages etc.

REVIEW OF SCHEME

The Councillors' Allowances scheme is reviewed, normally on an annual basis, by the Independent Panel on Councillors Remuneration which makes recommendations to the Council.

The recommendations of the Panel are advertised in the local media prior to consideration by the Council. The scheme agreed by Council takes effect from 1 April each year.

The actual allowances and expenses paid to Councillors and co-opted members are reported annually to Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee following the end of the financial year.

Further details of all Members allowances are available from Sharon Sissons Democratic Services, *Room 2.3, Ext 5115*.