

Woughton Community Council

Councillors Allowances and Expenses Policy 2024

Introduction / Overarching aims

This policy is made under the terms of the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

This policy takes into consideration the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel appointed by the Principal Authority (Milton Keynes City Council) and further recommendations following consultation during 2023.

Woughton Community Council currently has 19 councillors, who serve a four-year term of office and, as long as they have been elected, are entitled to these allowances. Expenses are payable to ALL councillors, excluding those that have been co-opted.

Policy

Basic Allowances

- All elected councillors receive a basic allowance of £916 per annum (as of May 2024). This is paid in two instalments and is subject to both tax and National Insurance contributions where applicable.
- If a councillor ceases to be a councillor before the end of their term of office, payment of the allowance ceases, and a pro rata calculation is made to ensure the councillor receives the right amount of allowance. If necessary, an adjustment for under or overpayment may have to be made and the council reserves the right to recover any overpayment of Basic Allowance.
- The Basic Allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of all councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers and constituents and attendance at meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs, such as the use of their homes for council business, telephone rental and broadband charges.

Special Allowances

- The council pays a specific allowance to the Chair of the Council, to reflect the additional demands and responsibilities that this office confers. This amount is double that of a councillor's basic allowance - £1832 per annum (as of May 2024).
- The council also pays an additional specific allowance to the Leader of the Council, reflecting again the additional demands and responsibilities. This is paid at the same rate as the Chair of the Council. This reflects the special nature of this council, in having a Leader (un-prescribed in legislation).

- These allowances are paid in two instalments and are subject to tax and National Insurance contributions where applicable. Councillors may choose to be paid through the WCC 'PAYE' scheme or make a declaration that they are responsible for all relevant declarations relating to this allowance.
- In the event that a councillor who is receiving a specific allowance is unable to carry out the duties associated with the role for a period of three months or more, the council will consider the circumstances with the option of ceasing the specific allowance and making a retrospective payment to a deputising councillor who is stepping onto the position, continuing this payment until the original councillor is able to resume the role.

Co-opted members of the council

- Under legislation, any member who has been co-opted onto the council is unable to be paid any allowances. They are, however, able to claim expenses, as detailed below.

Expenses

Woughton Community Council is committed to ensuring that ALL members of our community who are eligible to stand as councillors are able to do so. If elected or co-opted onto the council, the council is also committed to support access and attendance for all. The expenses policy noted below reflects this commitment.

Child Care and Dependents Allowance

Due to legislation, the council is unable to pay for childcare or dependents care costs. It is important that it is recognised that this legislation is considered to be unhelpful by the council and we continue to make representations to government through our national bodies to try and address this situation.

Travel and Subsistence

Where possible, travel and subsistence should be planned in advance and paid for via the Responsible Finance Officer. Where this isn't possible (e.g. where a private vehicle is used or a meal is bought whilst away from the offices), the following policy applies.

Councillors will be reimbursed for travel at the current rates agreed by the National Joint Council (NJC) for reimbursement of council officers.

Councillors will be reimbursed the full costs of travel *using the most appropriate means* at standard class, whilst carrying out approved duties. A valid receipt **MUST** be provided. Councillors who are undertaking Approved Duties may claim for reasonable costs for meals. These are currently set at:

- Breakfast – up to £5.00 (if working away between 6am - 9am)
- Lunch – up to £8.00 (if working away between 12 noon – 2pm)
- Evening meal – up to £12 (if working away between 6pm – 10pm)

Please note that these allowances are only payable if working away throughout the duration of these hours and only if no food is provided (e.g. if on a training course that includes lunch, no additional allowance is payable).

Information Technology and Communications

Councillors will be provided with suitable information technology equipment (e.g. laptop, tablet or similar), which will remain the property of the council and will be subject to the same restrictions as the basic allowance (i.e. is only provided whilst undertaking the role, to be returned if a suspension takes place and at the end of a councillor's tenure).

Councillors are able to claim for a contribution towards the costs of broadband provision at their homes. This is intended to enable them to undertake their councillor role whilst at home and is limited to a maximum of £10 per month.

If a councillor ceases to be a councillor before the end of their term of office, payment of the broadband allowance ceases and a pro rata calculation is made to ensure the councillor receives the right amount of allowance. If necessary, an adjustment for under or overpayment may have to be made and the council reserves the right to recover any overpayment of the broadband allowance.

Time scales for claiming

All claims for any expenses and allowances must be made within three months. Any claim falling outside this timescale can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances with the approval of the Chair of Council, Chair of Operations and Resources Committee and Responsible Finance Officer.

Dual Authority Roles

Councillors cannot receive an allowance from more than one authority (e.g. MKC) for the same duties. In the event that a parish councillor who is also a Ward Councillor is undertaking duties on behalf of both authorities, the claim should be made to Milton Keynes Council.

Forgoing Allowances

A councillor may forgo all or part of any allowance which they are entitled to, provided they have given written notice to the Council Manager and RFO.

Suspension and Withholding Allowances

In the event of a councillor being suspended from duty following an investigation by the Monitoring Officer, allowance will not be paid to the councillor concerned during the period of suspension. If necessary, a pro-rata payment will be made and any under or overpayment adjusted accordingly. The council reserves the right to reclaim any overpaid allowances.

This policy will be reviewed annually and will be linked to recommendation(s) from the Independent Review Panel and Milton Keynes Council policies.

Approved duties

Approved duties, for which Travel and Subsistence Allowances, (*Childcare and Carers Allowances*) are payable include:

- Full Council meetings
- Committee Meetings (where the councillor is a member of that committee)
- A meeting of an 'outside body' where the councillor has been nominated to be the council's representative
- A meeting which has been authorised by either the Full Council or a Committee of the council and agreed within the written minutes

- Attendance at training, conferences, seminars and other councillor development activities, as agreed with Operations Committee or Full Council
- Council 'Awaydays'
- Provision of councillor surgeries, roadshows, casework or similar
- Attendance at external meetings pertinent to the councillor's role, after agreement from Council Manager, Chair of Council or Chair of Committee.
- Other duties, as agreed with the Council Manager, Chair of Council or Chair of Committee.

Last review date:	May 2024
Next review date:	May 2025
Lead:	Council Manager
Overseeing Committee:	Full Council
Approved:	FC 96/24f – 7 th May 2024
Review cycle:	Annually (as part of the Annual Meeting)