

Report to: Governance Committee

Date of meeting: 27 January 2026

By: Deputy Chief Executive

Title: Scheme of Members' Allowances – Index for Annual Adjustment to Allowances

Purpose: To consider the proposals regarding the use of an index to allow for the annual adjustment of allowances.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Governance Committee is recommended to recommend to the County Council to:

- 1) agree that provision should continue to be made in the Scheme of Members' Allowances for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to an index;
 - 2) agree that the index should continue to be the percentage increase in the salaries of East Sussex County Council managers who are on locally negotiated pay; and
 - 3) agree that the index is applied to the Scheme of Members' Allowances until the full review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances takes place as part of the Local Government Reorganisation process.
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1 Background

1.1 East Sussex County Council operates a Members' Allowance Scheme, which outlines the types of remuneration and support available to elected Members for their responsibilities and duties. The scheme includes payments for basic allowances, special responsibilities, and covers travel, subsistence, and other expenses related to official Council business. These allowances are set to compensate Members for time spent and obligations carried out during their roles as representatives of the County Council.

1.2 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 allow for the Members' Allowances Scheme to make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index as may be specified by the authority. Where an authority has regard to an index for the purpose of annual adjustment of allowances it must not rely on that index for longer than a period of 4 years before seeking a further recommendation from the Independent Remuneration Panel. In the absence of an agreed index to allow for annual adjustments to members' allowances there would be a need for the Independent Remuneration Panel to meet each year and report to the Governance Committee which would subsequently report to the County Council on any possible adjustment to members' allowances.

1.3 The annual adjustment mechanism used for the East Sussex County Council Scheme of Members' Allowances was last approved by the Full Council in March 2022, where it was agreed that the allowances should continue to be indexed to the percentage increase (average percentage of lump sum increases for the 2022/23 financial year) mirroring the National Joint Council (NJC) award in the salaries of managers who are on locally negotiated pay. The annual adjustment to members' allowances has been linked to any increase in Local Managerial Grade (LMG) managers pay for over 23 years.

1.4 In November 2025, the Governance Committee considered the Scheme of Members' Allowances in the context of the Council's proposal for Local Government reorganisation

submitted to Government, the outcome of which is not known at this stage and the Government decision expected in March 2026. If approved, LGR will result in a unitary council and will lead to potentially significant changes to the roles and functions of Members, which it is anticipated will impact on the Scheme of Members' Allowances.

1.5 In December 2025, the Full Council resolved to agree to postpone the full review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances scheduled for 2026, with a view to the process commencing in 2027 ahead of implementation for Vesting Day in 2028. However, should Government not proceed with LGR, to agree that a review be carried out and reported to Council in the autumn of 2026. It was also noted that a review of the annual adjustment mechanism will take place in compliance with the Regulations as set out in paragraph 1.2.

2 Supporting information

2.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel met in January 2026 and has considered the continued use of an index to allow for the annual adjustment of allowances together with one written representation from a County Councillor and comparative information from other County Authorities. The Panel was of the view that an index should be used and supported the existing arrangement whereby the annual adjustment reflected any increase in the salaries of managers on locally negotiated pay.

2.2 The Panel recommends that provision should continue to be made in the Scheme of Members' Allowances for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to an index and that the index should continue to reflect the percentage increase in the salaries of managers who are on locally negotiated pay.

2.3 The Panel was of the view that the indexing is applied to the Scheme of Members' Allowances for the period of one year having regard to the current proposals for LGR in East Sussex and anticipated elections in 2027 to a new authority which would consist of a larger number of members and incorporate different responsibilities. Although the Panel recommend that the index is only relied on for one year, the timescales in relation to LGR process will be worked through pending the decision by Government and therefore it is recommended that the index is relied on until a full review takes place as part of the LGR process.

3 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 In order to continue with the use of an index for the annual adjustment of allowances the views of the Independent Remuneration Panel had to be sought. The Panel supported the use of the previous index.

3.2 It is therefore proposed that the Committee recommends the County Council agree that provision should continue to be made in the Scheme of Members' Allowances for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to an index and that the index should continue to be the percentage increase in the salaries of managers who are on locally negotiated pay for a period of one year to be applied until the full review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances takes place as part of the LGR process.

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