

SODC/VOWH Independent Remuneration Panel Members' Allowances 2020

Analysis of Questionnaire Responses from District Councillors

John Bradon, 20/10/2020, version 1

Background

Councillors in the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils were asked their views on allowances and about half completed online questionnaires set up by Mark Palmer with 24 responses from VOWH and 24 from SODC.

This note summarises the results. It combines the two Districts surveys but also shows where their views differed. The analysis is in a spreadsheet: "Analysis of Combined SODC VOWH surveys.xls"

Q1 How many hours per week do you spend on Council business?

Splitting out the basic house from the extra hours on special roles gives the following results:

The average **Basic hours per week reported is 14 hours** (SODC 15 hours, VOWH 13 hours) Three respondents quoted 40 hours or more but taking these out doesn't change the average too much (it goes down from 14 to 12 hours).

12 of 48 respondents reported less than the 10 basic hours per week assumed in the current pay formula.

Q2 If you hold a special role(s), how many hours does that take?

The hours quoted range from 3 to 33 per week as you'd expect from the wide range of roles.

Both holders of the role of Chair of Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (which we are considering adding a new SRA for) responded. One said 30 hours and the other 20 hours per week.

Q4 What is an acceptable percentage of time to be unremunerated?"

The average response was 28% and 33 of 39 respondents thought it should be **under** the current 40%. 5 of the 48 respondents thought 50% and one thought 75% should be unremunerated.

Q5 The present Basic Allowance is £5,084. Is this appropriate?

56% felt the current level is appropriate. There is a difference between the two councils: in VOWH, 68% think it appropriate but in SODC the percentage is 43%.

Note: For Q6 "What do you think it should be?" there were too few clear answers to summarise. I've also not summarised the useful responses to Q12: "Do you have any other comments on Members' Allowances". One was "To be an elected councillor is a privilege and because I am retired I don't need the allowance. People in work and sacrificing work/family time do need it.". In Q5, we are asking people who **did** choose to stand as councillor if they feel the basic allowance is appropriate.

Q7 Special Responsibility Allowances Ranking

The results for VOWH and SODC were very similar and I combined the two surveys and averaged the rankings.

The only SRA with a perceived ranking from the survey different by more than 3 places to the ranking of the current allowances was the Chair of the Joint Audit and Governance Committee. This was ranked 7th equal in the survey but is currently one of the lowest 4 in terms of current pay. Note: 7th in pay would be somewhere between £2,033 (8th highest) and £3,050 (7th highest) rather than the current £1,526 for that role.

Q8 Would you like to see any changes made to these SRAs?

The comments can be summarised as:

Comment	Respondents
Planning Chair higher	5
Audit and Scrutiny Chair higher	4
Leader higher	3
Chair of opposition higher	3
Chair of opposition lower	1

The comments match the difference in perceived ranking and current pay for the Chair of Joint Audit and Governance Committee. The Planning Chair perceived ranking was fourth, which the same as the current pay ranking (after the Leader on £20,334, Deputy Leader on £14,234 and Cabinet Members on £10,166). There is then quite a gap down to the Planning Chair allowance of £6,101.

Q9 Would you like to see any new SRAs introduced?

Suggestion	respondents
Members of planning committee	8
Chair of Climate Emergency Advisory Committee	6
Vice Chair of Climate Emergency Advisory Committee	3
Shadow Cabinet positions	1

Comments on the planning committee workload mentioned the reading needed and the site visits. The role of **Vice** Chair of Climate Emergency Advisory Committee is mentioned (as well as the Chair).

Q10 Dependent Relative Care - Should these rates be increased?

District	Yes%	No%
SODC	29%	71%
VOWH	40%	60%
Overall	35%	66%

27 of 41 (66%) felt that Dependent Relative Care rates should not be increased.