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**Meeting:** Council

**Date:** 24 September 2009

**Subject:** Members' Allowances Scheme

**Report of:** Director of Corporate Resources

**Summary:** The report proposes the adoption of two amendments to the current Scheme of Members' Allowances. The first being to enable Members required to stay away from home, whilst on official business, to claim for the cost of overnight accommodation, where such costs are not included within any other charges for the event attended. The second amendment being the inclusion within the Scheme of a clause to enable all Councillors to be able to claim travelling allowances for the purpose of meeting with Officers, up to an average of four visits per month.

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Contact Officer: Stephen Cooke, Electoral/Members' Services Manager

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. that the Scheme of Members' Allowances be amended by the inclusion of the following clauses within Schedule 2 - Approved Duties

		An allowance per night of up to
(a)	Absence overnight from usual place of residence – (This allowance includes accommodation and breakfast for which the costs have not already been incurred by the Council)	£90
(b)	Absence overnight in London or at certain annual conferences or specified Local Authority Associations - (This allowance includes accommodation and breakfast for which the costs have not already been incurred by the Council)	£150
(c)	Attendance by Councillors for the purpose of meeting Officers up to an average, calculated over the Council year, of four visits per month.	

## The Scheme of Members' Allowances

1. The Members' Allowances Scheme for the year commencing 1 April 2009, was adopted by the Shadow Council at its meeting held on 26 February 2009, following consideration of the recommendations made to it by the Independent Remuneration Panel.
2. The Scheme recommended to and adopted by the Shadow Council was modelled on the Scheme that was adopted for the year of the Shadow Council. During that year legacy authorities continued to provide services whilst the Shadow Council concerned itself with strategic planning for the creation of Central Bedfordshire as from 1 April 2009.
3. As a result of the strategic nature of the Shadow Council, it was un-necessary for the Scheme of Members' Allowances to include certain travelling and subsistence allowances that were deemed only be required by an authority with full service delivery responsibilities.
4. The allowances that have subsequently been identified as being omitted from the current Scheme relate firstly to the cost of overnight accommodation where a Councillor is required to stay away from home, whilst on official business that is not related to a conference, seminar or training event where such costs are included within the overall charge for the event. The second omission is an allowance for Councillors who do not hold a position of Special Responsibility, as noted within Schedule 2 of the Scheme, who wish to meet Officers to discuss matters that have arisen from constituents enquiries.
5. Having identified these omissions from the Scheme of Members' Allowances, the Independent Remuneration Panel have been consulted with a request that the inclusion of allowances to cover the two omissions from the Scheme be addressed.
6. The Panel noted that the Scheme of Members' Allowances adopted by the former County Council, included the following allowances:
  - (a)
    - (i) **Absence overnight from usual place of residence**  
(This allowance includes accommodation and breakfast for which the costs have not already been incurred by the Council) £84.03
    - (ii) **Absence overnight in London or at certain annual conferences or specified Local Authority Associations**  
(This allowance includes accommodation and breakfast for which the costs have not already been incurred by the Council) £95.84
  - (b) Attendance by Councillors for the purpose of meeting Officers and attending briefings up to an average, calculated over the Council year, of four visits per month for Committee Members.

7. Having considered these omissions Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel have recommended:

7.1 Overnight Accommodation

that the cost of overnight accommodation, with separate amounts applicable for London and certain annual conferences or specified Local Authority Associations, be included within the Members' Allowances Scheme for the current year, but that all such expenses be subject to receipts being submitted and the allowance being the maximum amount that may be claimed. In addition, the Panel noted the rates shown within the former County Council's Scheme and felt these should be linked to those paid by the Local Government Association (LGA) or other suitable public body. On making enquiries it appears that the LGA, do not set overnight accommodation allowances within their Members' Allowances Scheme as when accommodation is required, bookings are made directly by the Association. It is noted however that the IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency) for local government has fixed rates as shown out below:

- |     |                              |                |
|-----|------------------------------|----------------|
| (a) | Inner London hotel allowance | £150 per night |
| (b) | Hotel allowance elsewhere    | £90 per night  |

7.2 Travelling Allowance

That a clause be added to the list of Approved Duties, within Schedule 2 to the Scheme of Members' Allowances to enable those Councillors who do not hold a position of Special Responsibility to be able to claim mileage allowance if they attend any of the Council's Offices, for the purpose of meeting Officers and attending briefings, subject to the number of such claims being limited to an average of four visits per month over the civic year.

<b>CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS</b>
<p><b>Council Priorities:</b> None</p> <p><b>Financial:</b> There is currently a provision of £33k within the Members' Costs budget in respect of Subsistence which is anticipated to be sufficient to meet the additional costs arising from these proposals.</p> <p><b>Legal:</b> The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.</p> <p><b>Risk Management:</b> None</p>

**Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

None

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

None

**Community Safety:**

None

**Sustainability:**

None

**Appendices:** None