

12th July 2024

WLGA MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME, MEMBERS' EXPENSES POLICY AND SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL GROUPS

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is for the WLGA Council to note the WLGA Members' Allowances Scheme, the WLGA Members' Expenses Policy and provision of support to WLGA political groups.

Background

2. The WLGA has a Members' Allowances Scheme for WLGA Senior Office Holders, in line with the WLGA Constitution:
 - 25.1 The Association may provide a scheme for the payment of allowances and expenses to members appointed to agreed Association roles, in recognition of duties carried out on behalf of the Association (Scheme of Allowances).
3. The WLGA Members' Allowances Scheme is applied on an annual basis, effective from the date of each WLGA Council Annual General Meeting.
4. The Scheme is voluntary, and members can choose whether to receive their allowance. In line with local authorities' own practices the WLGA Scheme is made publicly available via the WLGA's website.
5. Members will note that the WLGA Members' Allowances Scheme is not within the remit of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

Independent Review of Members' Allowances

6. In Autumn 2022 an Independent Panel was convened, in line with the WLGA Constitution, to review and advise WLGA Council members on the WLGA Members Allowances Scheme. The Scheme had not been reviewed since 2005-06 and it was clear the role of WLGA senior leaders and spokespersons had changed significantly in recent years, particularly in terms of time commitments and responsibility.
7. The Panel's report was presented to the WLGA Council at the meeting in March 2023 and while the WLGA Members' Allowances Scheme is not within the remit of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, it was agreed that annual changes to the WLGA Members' Allowances Scheme should be linked to the

Remuneration Panel's determinations for any annual changes to the '*Basic salary for elected members of Principal Councils*'.

8. The WLGA Members' Allowances Scheme for 2024-25 will be:

Role	2024-25
Leader	£13,257.50
Deputy Leader	£9,943.13
Presiding Officer	£9,943.13
Deputy Presiding Officer (Majority Group)	£3,314.38
Group Leader Independent	£5,253
Group Leader Plaid Cymru	£5,253
Group Leader Welsh Liberal Democrats	£5,253
Education Spokesperson	£5,253
Finance Spokesperson	£5,253
Social Services Spokesperson	£5,253
Total	£67,976.14

9. The above table is based on information received in advance of the AGM that there will be four Political Groups within the Association (Labour, Independent, Plaid Cymru and Welsh Liberal Democrats).
10. In line with Independent Remuneration Panel regulations, only one allowance will be paid to any member.

Other Members' Allowances

11. Members who support the WLGA Improvement Programme, including participating in a Peer Challenge, a Panel Performance Assessment or undertaking some bespoke work, are eligible to receive a WLGA Member Peer day rate. This is aligned with the LGA which is £362 for this year.

- WLGA Member Peer Rate £362 per day

12. Some WLGA nominated positions on LGA Boards may be entitled to receive remuneration separately through the LGA's Scheme of Members' Allowances¹. The LGA's Members Allowances Scheme was updated in January 2024 and allowances are as follows:

- LGA Executive Advisory Board (WLGA Representative) £3,209

¹ [LGA Scheme of Members' Allowances \(January 2024\)](#)

- Employers' Side Bodies (WLGA Member) rate £362 per day

13. Furthermore, Welsh local authority members may be appointed to a range of LGA Boards. These members are appointed as representatives of the LGA Political Groups and not on behalf of the WLGA. Members appointed to LGA Boards will be entitled to receive allowances ranging from £3,209 (member), £ 9,627 (vice chair) to £ 19,256 (chair).

WLGA Members' Expenses Policy

14. There will be instances when members are carrying out approved duties in relation to their WLGA role will incur expenses. The WLGA Members Expenses Policy (Appendix 1) sets out the details on who may claim, what may be claimed for, and the processes to be followed for reimbursement.

Support for Political Groups

15. Section 24 of the WLGA Constitution confirms that support may be provided for political groups

"24.1 Political groups on the Council recognised by the Association under Article 8 for the purposes of representation on Committees may seek support to enable them to fulfil their role.

24.2 Political groups recognised by the Association shall be entitled to reasonable support from the Association to enable them to play their part in influencing parties on behalf of Member Councils."

16. WLGA Group leaders previously discussed and agreed the need to provide adequate support to WLGA Groups for the 2022-27 term, in the furtherance of WLGA business and policy development, and in line with the support provided to political groups within the LGA.

17. The WLGA has budgeted for the equivalent of 1 FTE officer (SCP 30), from 2022-23, to be shared on a proportionate basis between the WLGA Groups. The Labour Group receive the equivalent of 3 days per week support. Discussions are taking place with Plaid Cymru on potential support they can provide to the Group and the Independent Group is currently receiving secretariat support from the WLGA's Corporate Policy Team. Group Leaders are welcome to discuss their requirements for ongoing political support.

Recommendations

18. The WLGA Council is invited to:

- 18.1 Note the WLGA Members' Allowances Scheme for 2024-25.**
- 18.2 Note the WLGA Members' Expenses Policy**
- 18.3 Note the provision of Support for Political Groups (paras 15-17).**

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WLGA Members' Expenses Policy

Accommodation, Travel and Subsistence

1. When carrying out duties in relation to their WLGA role and representation, there will be instances when members incur expenses. This policy sets out the scope for who may claim, what may be claimed for, and the processes involved.
2. For all planned expenditure (accommodation, train tickets etc), the WLGA will make the bookings and pay the provider directly on behalf of the councillor(s) involved.
3. For ad-hoc expenses incurred (mileage, parking etc) a claim should be retrospectively completed and submitted to members@wlga.gov.uk Upon receipt of this, the Democratic Services team will approach the relevant WLGA Director/Head of Policy who requested / authorised the member's attendance. A copy of the claim form can be found at Appendix 2.
4. If a member's Authority has booked and paid for travel or accommodation related to WLGA business, an invoice should be submitted on a quarterly basis to members@wlga.gov.uk Upon receipt of this, the Democratic Services team will approach the relevant WLGA Director/Head of Policy who requested / authorised the member's attendance.
5. Those roles which are eligible for travel, accommodation and / or subsistence are the Senior Office holders;
 - Leader
 - Deputy Leader
 - Presiding Officer
 - Deputy Presiding Officer
 - Spokespeople
6. Reasonable travel and subsistence costs will be paid by the WLGA for Approved Duties set out in paragraph 8 below.
7. Travel and subsistence costs for all other meetings should be met by a member's own authority. In the case of dual-hatted members, costs should be met by the authority that they are representing on the WLGA.

Approved Duties for payment of Travel and Subsistence Costs

8. Approved duties for payment of travel & subsistence under the WLGA scheme are:

- Attendance as a WLGA appointed representative at meetings with Cabinet Secretaries/Ministers, Government Departments or with any other partner or stakeholder;
- Attendance as a WLGA appointed representative at meetings of any outside body - public, voluntary or charitable – on which the WLGA is formally represented;
- Attendance as the WLGA appointed representative at receptions, visits, conferences, seminars or other functions; and
- Attendance and involvement in WLGA events in their WLGA capacity. For example, chairing a seminar or presenting in their capacity as a WLGA Senior Officer holder rather than attending as the representative of their own local authority.

Train Journeys

9. The expectation is that planned train journeys are booked in advance for members by WLGA officers using the WLGA corporate account (currently with Transport for Wales) as per paragraph 2. Where, for whatever reason, this has not happened, the WLGA will reimburse rail fares, *based on the standard fare*, with the expectation that reasonable effort be made to book as far in advance as possible to secure the best rate available.

Journeys by Car, Motorcycle or Bike

10. Wherever possible, members are expected to travel by public transport. Where it is necessary for a member to use their own vehicle or bicycle when on approved WLGA duties, mileage will be paid at the HMRC approved rate.

Journeys by Air

11. The expectation is that planned flights will have been booked in advance for members by WLGA officers so that preferential rates can be sought. Where it is necessary for a councillor to travel by air, either within the UK or overseas, reimbursement will be on the basis of an economy class air fare.

12. In exceptional circumstances, the WLGA will cover the cost of a premium economy or business class fare. Members must provide a clear explanation, including any medical notes, of why travel by business class is necessary, which should be agreed by the WLGA Chief Executive prior to the booking being made. The WLGA will not cover or reimburse the cost of first-class air travel.

Overnight Accommodation

13. As per paragraph 2, the expectation is that WLGA officers will book and arrange payment for accommodation for members in advance. Where this has not been possible, the cost of overnight accommodation will only be reimbursed when:
- A member attends a residential event as a WLGA appointed representative;
 - Attendance at a non-residential meeting by a member as the WLGA's appointed representative would require them to leave home before 7.00am or arrive back home after 11pm.
14. If you are claiming back overnight accommodation via expenses, you will be subject to the IRP determined limits. This means the WLGA may not be able to reimburse the full cost(s) incurred.
15. If a member's authority has booked overnight accommodation in relation to approved WLGA business on a member's behalf, they should invoice the WLGA accordingly on a quarterly basis. If a member has booked and paid for their own accommodation, reimbursement will be subject to the limits set by the IRP.
16. The WLGA will not reimburse claims for alcoholic beverages.

Reimbursement of Expenses

17. Receipts must be provided for all travel and subsistence claims. No claim will be paid unless a valid receipt is provided.
18. Claims should be submitted promptly identifying clearly and fully the meeting to which the claim refers. Reference to a meeting as "LGA, London" for example will not be sufficient and will delay reimbursement of the claim.

Publication of Costs Incurred and Expenses Paid

19. Members should be aware that as per the policy of the LGA, details of amounts claimed will be published on the WLGA website. An example of the published data can be seen at [LGA Councillors' Expenses 2022-23.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)

