

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Scheme of Allowances 2025/2026</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	<b>Finance Committee</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>13 March 2025</b>
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	<b>For decision</b>
<b>To be discussed In Committee YES/NO</b>	<b>No</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Cohesive Leadership
Outcome	Council has agreed policies and procedures and decision making is consistent with them.
Lead Officer	Chief Finance Officer

<b>Estimated Timescale for Completion</b>	
Date to be Completed	1 April 2025

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	£1,311,157
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>YES/NO</b>
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	
Staffing Costs	

<b>Legal Considerations</b>	
Input of Legal Services Required	<b>YES/NO</b>
Legal Opinion Obtained	<b>YES/NO</b>

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

This reports provides an information to members regarding the Scheme of Allowances for 2025/2026 in light of updated Department Guidance, LG15/24 issued in December 2024.

## **2.0 Background**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council must establish a scheme of allowances payable to Members annually. The scheme provides for the payment of allowances to Councillors on the basis that:

- 1 – The maximum level of basic allowance as determined by the Department for Communities (DfC) is paid
- 2 – The maximum level of carers allowances as determined by the DfC are paid
- 3 – The maximum level of mileage rates as determined by the DfC are paid
- 4 – Councillors' payments are made on the third last banking day of each month

### **2.1 Detail**

The scheme of allowances for 2025/26, a copy of which has been included with this report, considers a number of factors:

- 1 – basic allowance – remains at 2024/25 level – an increase has been budgeted for in the 2025/26 estimates pending Departmental review of basic allowance
- 2 – mileage rates
- 3 – increases in rates for dependant carer's allowance in line with the National Living Wage
- 4 – Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)

The four items are in keeping with the normal periodic update of the scheme of allowances.

### **2.2 Amendments**

Circular LG 15/24 (attached as an appendix) from DfC dated December 2024 sets out the revised consolidated Councillor's Allowances guidance, as our scheme is predicated on the inclusion of the maximum rates allowable under departmental guidance any updates to rates of basic allowance will be automatically applied should Council approve this report. The Basic allowance remains at £17,456 per annum, it should be noted that an increase had been allowed for in the rates estimates for 2025/26. Other changes include the hourly and maximum monthly rates payable in respect of dependant carer's allowance.

## **3.0 Recommendation**

**It is recommended that** Council approve the scheme of allowances for 2025/26 as tabled and authorises the Chief Finance Officer to implement any further amendments as and when announced by the Department for Communities for the same period.

# Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

## Scheme of allowances payable to Councillors

This scheme is made under the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019.

In this scheme:

- approved duties are as listed in Schedule 1, as provided for in the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019;
- Department means the Department for Communities;
- Guidance means the Department for Communities guidance on Councillors' allowances, LG15/24 issued in December 2024; and
- Regulations means the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019.

### **1. Basic Allowance**

- 1.1 Subject to sub-paragraph 2.3 and paragraph 6 below, for the year ending on 31 March 2026
- 1.2 an annual basic allowance of £17,456(≠) shall be paid to each member.
- 1.3 Not more than one basic allowance is payable to any councillor
- 1.4 Where applicable this will be paid pro-rata.

≠ (The basic allowance includes an element for incidental and consumable costs incurred by councillors in their official capacity. In 2015/16 this element was £1,000 and each year this amount is uplifted in line with the increase applied to the basic allowance, therefore this element within the basic allowance is £1,229 from 1 April 2024.)

### **2. Mayor's, Deputy Mayor's and Special Responsibility Allowance**

- 2.1 For the year ending 31 March 2026, Mayor's, Deputy Mayor's and special responsibility allowances shall be paid to councillors as follows:

Mayor	£12,000
Deputy Mayor	£5,000
Partnership Panel Representative	£1,000
Committee Chair (x5)	£3,000
Audit Committee Chair	£750
Planning Committee member*	£2,400

Planning committee recipient to rotate annually with 8/7 members receiving.

- 2.2 Subject to paragraph 3.4 and paragraph 6 below, the amount of each such allowance shall be the amount specified in paragraph 3.1. Regulation 5 of the 2019 Regulations stipulates that a special responsibility allowance must not be paid to more than 50% of the councillors in the Council.
- 2.3 Not more than one special responsibility allowance is payable to any councillor, in the event of a Councillor qualifying for more than one allocation the higher amount shall be paid.
- 2.4 Where applicable the allowances in 2.1 above will be paid pro-rata.

### **3. Dependants' Carer's Allowance**

- 3.1 Councillors are entitled to claim a dependants' carer's allowance towards reimbursement of actual reasonable costs necessarily incurred in providing care for a dependant while carrying out an approved duty.
- 3.2 A dependant lives with a claimant and is defined as:
- a child under 16 years old;
  - a child 16 years old or more, where there is medical/social work evidence that full-time care is required;
  - an adult with a recognised physical/mental disability where there is medical/social work evidence that full-time care is required; or
  - an elderly relative requiring full-time care.
- 3.3 A dependants' carer's allowance shall be payable based upon actual receipted costs or at the appropriate hourly rate, whichever is the lower; up to the monthly maximum. Payments shall be at the rates given in paragraph 3.4, which are subject to the limits determined by the Department.
- 3.4 For the year ending 31 March 2026, the hourly rate of dependants' carer's allowance for standard care shall be £12.21\*, and for specialised care shall be £24.42. The monthly maximum for standard care paid to individual councillors shall be £635, and the monthly maximum for specialised care shall be £1,270. Councillors may claim only one DCA in respect of each occurrence of approved duty. Only one DCA rate is payable even if there are 2 or more children/dependants being cared for.
- \* based on national living wage

#### 4. Travel and Subsistence Allowances

- 4.1 A councillor or committee member is entitled to claim travel and subsistence allowances where expenditure on travelling and subsistence has been necessarily incurred in connection with an approved duty as specified in Schedule 1.
- 4.2 The rates of travel allowance for travel by public transport shall not exceed the actual amount paid. Where reasonably available, the cheapest available form of public transport should be used, except in urgent cases.
- 4.3 The rates of travel allowance for travel by private vehicle shall be the amounts shown below, which are within the maxima determined by the Department.

Type of Vehicle	Rate
A pedal cycle	20.0p per mile
A motor cycle – all engine capacities	24.0p per mile
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 450cc but not exceeding 999cc	46.9p per mile 13.7p per mile*
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 999cc but not exceeding 1,199cc	52.2p per mile 14.4p per mile*
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 1,199cc	65.0p per mile 16.4p per mile*
An electric car	45.0p per mile 25.0p per mile**
Passenger rate	5.0p per mile

\* National Joint Council for Local Government Services – casual user rates after 8,500 miles.

\*\* For mileage above 10,000 miles

- 4.4 The rates of subsistence shall be the amounts shown below, which are within the maxima determined by the Department.

Period/Meal	Rates	
	British Isles £	London £
An absence involving an <b>overnight stay only</b> , away from the normal place of residence	100.70	122.45
<b>Breakfast Allowance</b> (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period before 11am)	11.50	11.50
<b>Lunch Allowance</b> (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 12 noon and 2pm)	13.50	13.50
<b>Tea Allowance</b> (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 3pm and 6pm)	4.70	4.70
<b>Evening Meal Allowance</b> (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period ending after 7pm)	20.95	20.95
Sub-total for meals	50.65	50.65
Total maximum rate (absence of 24 hours)	151.35	173.10

Note: **All** claims must be supported by appropriate receipts relating to actual expenses incurred.

- 4.5 The amount claimed for subsistence should include VAT
- 4.6 The amount claimed for subsistence should not include any alcohol.

## 5. Part-Year Entitlement

- 5.1 This scheme may be revoked and amended at any time.
- 5.2 The amounts stated in paragraph 1 will be subject to any indexing increase during the year
- 5.3 The amounts stated in paragraph 3 will be subject to any increase to the national living wage.
- 5.4 If an amendment to this scheme is made which affects the payment of a basic allowance or special responsibility allowance in the year in which the amendment is made, then in relation to each of the periods:
- beginning with the year and ending with the day before that day on which the first amendment in that year takes effect; or
  - beginning with the day on which an amendment takes effect and ending with the day before that day on which the next amendment takes effect, (if none) with the year,

the entitlement to such allowance shall reflect the proportion of the year when entitlement existed.

- 5.5 Where the term of office of a councillor begins or ends other than at the beginning or end of a year, entitlement to a basic allowance shall reflect the proportion of the year when entitlement existed.
- 5.6 Where a councillor has during a part of, but not throughout, a year such special responsibilities as attract entitlement to a special responsibility allowance, that entitlement shall reflect the proportion of the year when entitlement existed.
- 5.7 Where a councillor is suspended or partially suspended from his or her responsibilities or duties as a councillor, in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the part of the Basic Allowance, Special Responsibility Allowance, or Mayor/Deputy Mayor allowance payable to the Councillor in respect of the period for which the Councillor is suspended or partially suspended, will be withheld.

## **6. Claims and Payment**

- 6.1 Payments regarding basic allowance and special responsibility allowance shall be made in *instalments of one twelfth of the amount specified in this scheme on the third last banking day of each month.*
- 6.2 Claims for dependants' carer's allowance, travelling allowance or subsistence allowance should be made in writing within three months of the end of the month being claimed for, and should be accompanied by receipts, where appropriate.

## SCHEDULE 1

In accordance with Regulations, only the following are specified as the duties in respect of which basic allowance, dependants' carers' allowances, and travel and subsistence allowances are available.

1. attendance at a meeting of the council;
2. attendance at a meeting of a committee of the council;
3. attendance at a meeting of a sub-committee of the council;
4. attendance at a meeting of a joint committee;
5. attendance at a meeting of a sub-committee of a joint committee;
6. attendance at a meeting of a group committee established under the provisions of the Local Government (Employment of Group Building Control Staff) (Northern Ireland) 1994 or the Local Government (Employment of Group Environmental Health Staff) Order (Northern Ireland) 1994; or
7. the doing of anything approved by a council or anything of a class so approved, for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the council, or any of its committees or sub-committees, or as the case may be, of the joint committee or any of its sub-committees.

A site visit is now included in the list of approved duties and a site visit is defined as a visit made by a councillor in connection with an application for planning permission:

- which has been referred to a council for consultation under Part 2 of The Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016.; or
- at the request of the applicant for that planning permission, or the agent of an applicant, or at the request of an objector to that application.

Regarding Point 7, specific duties approved by Council include:-

- Conferences, Courses and Seminars
- Civic Functions
- Official & Courtesy Visits
- Special Council Meetings
- Attendance at a meeting of a working group/sub-committee of the Council, or other meeting related to the functions of the Council.
- Meetings of all outside bodies to which councillors are appointed, and meetings at which representation is required by councillors as a result of sitting on various groups/committees. Membership of these bodies has been rolled forward until the end of the Council term. Any member not wishing to be on an outside body can be replaced by a party colleague or if the party does not wish to retain the position, an alternative can be nominated at an appropriate Committee meeting of Council.