Department for Communities
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Chief Executive of each District Council
Finance Officer of each District Council
Other Interested Parties

Our ref: CO1-26-1747

26 November 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

CIRCULAR LG 15/2026 - CONSOLIDATED COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES CIRCULAR (Updated November 2026)

This consolidated circular reflects the 3.3% increase in the maximum rates of Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance from 1 April 2026, the revised rates of Dependants' Carers' Allowance from 1 April 2026, and the amended statutory arrangements for determining the amount of Basic Allowance under section 14 of the Administrative and Financial Provisions Act (Northern Ireland) 2026.

The Administrative and Financial Provisions Act (Northern Ireland) 2026 has received Royal Assent. Section 14 amends section 31 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 in respect of the determination of Basic Allowance.

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Section 31(1A) of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 now provides that, where the regulations prescribe a basic allowance, the amount shall be such as may be determined by the Department. A basic allowance is an allowance of a standard amount payable to all members of councils for the carrying out of the duties of a councillor.

Regulation 4(1) of the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019, as amended, provides that each member of a council is entitled to be paid a Basic Allowance by the council.

In accordance with section 31(1A) of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, the Department determines that the amount of Basic Allowance shall be £19,540 per annum with effect from 25 November 2026.

The Department also wishes to clarify the position in respect of the period from 1 April 2026 until the date on which the relevant provisions came into operation. Prior to 25 November 2026, the existing statutory arrangements apply. The maximum Basic Allowance payable from 1 April 2026 to 24 November 2026 is £19,540 per annum. Councils retain discretion in respect of the allowance payable for this period and may, therefore, decide to pay councillors the rate now set by the Department from 1 April 2026.

For the avoidance of doubt:

- councils have discretion regarding the rate of Basic Allowance payable for the period from 1 April 2026 to 24 November 2026;
- councils may determine an allowance for that period, up to the rate now set by the Department;
- from the date of 25 November onwards, councils must apply the rate of £19,540 per annum to all councillors.

The other allowances and payments set out below continue to be subject to the applicable statutory provisions.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this circular, please contact William Dobbin on 028 9082 3360 or by email at william.dobbin@communities-ni.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

GERARD MURRAY
Director of Local Government and Housing Regulation

1. Basic Allowance

- valid from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

Basic Allowance
Maximum £18,916 per annum ≠

- valid from 1 April 2026

Basic Allowance[1]
£19,540 per annum ≠

≠ (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. The element within the Basic Allowance is £1,375 from 1 April 2026.)

From 25 November 2026, the amount of Basic Allowance is determined by the Department under section 31(1A) of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Each member of a council is to be paid by the council a Basic Allowance. The Basic Allowance is a standard amount payable to all councillors for carrying out of the duties of a councillor.

[1] Councils retain the discretion to determine the rate of basic allowance payable up to the maximum amount to 24 November 2026; thereafter, the statutory rate of £19,540 per annum applies.

2. Dependants' Carers' Allowance

– valid from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

The following table states the maximum rates for dependants' carers' allowance.

Dependants' Carers' Allowance	**Hourly Rate** **£**	**Maximum Monthly Amount** **£**
Standard	12.21^	635
Specialist	24.42	1,270

^(Based on National Living Wage)

– valid from 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027

The following table states the maximum rates for dependants' carers' allowance.

Dependants' Carers' Allowance	**Hourly Rate** **£**	**Maximum Monthly Amount** **£**
Standard	12.71^	661
Specialist	25.42	1,322

^(Based on National Living Wage)

3. Travel Allowances

– valid from 1 April 2017

The following table states the maximum rates for travel allowances.

Type of Vehicle	**Rate per Mile** **Pence**	**Rate per Mile Above 8,500 miles** **Pence**	**Rate per Mile Above 10,000 miles** **Pence**
A pedal cycle	20.0p	20.0p	20.0p
A motor cycle (all engine capacities)	24.0p	24.0p	24.0p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 450cc but not exceeding 999cc	46.9p	13.7p	13.7p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 999cc but not exceeding 1,199cc	52.2p	14.4p	14.4p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 1,199cc	65.0p	16.4p	16.4p
An electric car	45.0p	45.0p	25.0p
Passenger rate (per passenger)	5.0p	5.0p	5.0p

4. Special Responsibility Allowance

– valid from 1 April 2026

The following table states the maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance that a council may pay. The maximum rate is based on the size of the council population. Each council's population figures are updated each year by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, and it is the duty of each council to operate within the total maximum rate appropriate to its population band. For ease of reference, the maximum amount that any individual councillor can receive within each band is also provided.

Population of council	**Maximum Special Responsibility Allowance** **£**	**Maximum (1/5th) for individual councillor** **£**
Less than 120,000	65,519	13,104
120,000 to 199,000	91,726	18,345
200,000 +	141,520	28,304

5. Subsistence Allowances

– valid from 1 April 2015

The following table states the maximum rates for subsistence; however, where councils believe it is necessary there is flexibility for councils to increase these rates by applying a suitable measure of price inflation.

PERIOD/MEAL	British Isles Rates £	London Rates £
Accommodation allowance - An absence involving an overnight stay, away from the normal place of residence. This rate does not include any meal allowance.	100.70	122.45
Breakfast allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period before 11 am)	11.50	11.50
Lunch allowance - (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 2 pm)	13.50	13.50
Tea allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 3 pm and 6 pm)	4.70	4.70
Evening meal allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period ending after 7 pm)	20.95	20.95