

Councillors claim nearly £2m expenses

By Beatrice Phillpotts

MORE than £1.7 million was paid to Surrey county councillors last year in allowances and expenses – the fourth largest payout compared to 27 other county councils in England.

Surrey leader David Hodge, who represents Warlingham, received £68,081 of the total £1,703,957 paid out in the financial year of 2017/18.

Mr Hodge's allowance is the second largest of the 27, with Essex heading the list, while Surrey's Conservative cabinet members received the third highest allowances, behind members in Essex and Kent.

Surrey deputy leader John Furey (Addlestone) collected £49,941.

This year he will receive slightly less for his special responsibility allowance (SRA), after an independent panel voted to cut the allowance for the role from £31,312 to £27,924.

Vice-chairman Tony Samuels (Walton South) will also receive less this year dropping from £8,015 to £6,512.

A basic allowance of £12,442 is paid to each ward annually to 'recognise the commitment' of

all councillors. Members are awarded SRAs for positions such as leader and deputy leader, through to cabinet membership, committee chairman roles and opposition group leader.

The additional awards range from £170 for an officer of a political group to £43,085 for council leader.

A councillor can qualify for more than one SRA.

Both David Harmer, (Hindhead and Western Villages), who chairs Surrey's audit and governance committee, and Nork councillor Nick Harrison, who helps oversee Surrey's pension fund, will receive an increased SRA of £10,019 in the current financial year.

Expenses are also paid for mileage and subsistence, such as food and accommodation.

Topping the chart for the most mileage claimed was Surrey chairman Peter Martin (Godalming South, Milford and Witley) at £3,924, – some 8,720 miles a year.

EX-SURREY chief executive David McNulty, who retired in September, received a pay rise of more than £14,000 in 2016/17 taking – his salary to £230,719.

New chief executive Joanna Killian, who will receive a salary of £220,000, – chief executive of Essex County Council from 2006-15 – was dubbed England's 'highest-paid civil servant' earning £311,000 prior to 2010.

Her pay fell to £210,000 when she left in 2015 to head accountant KPMG's local government section.

Of the 110 Surrey councillors eligible to claim allowances and expenses:–

■ Thirteen claimed an SRA of under £1,000

■ Forty-two claimed under £10,000,

■ Eight claimed under £20,000, and one under £40,000 and

■ Eight councillors claimed mileage of under £100,

■ Fifty-five under £1,000

■ Eleven between £1,000 and £2,000

■ Seven over £2,000 and two over £3,000.

Surrey's grand total bill of £1.7million, included:–

● Twenty-nine claims amounting to under £10,000,

● Fifty-one between £10,000 and £20,000,

● Eighteen between £20,000 and £30,000,

● Five between £30,000 and £40,000 while six claimed more than £40,000.

*The allowances and expenses paid in 2017/18, excluded unitary authorities and London boroughs.