

Councillor Remuneration: The Facts



The following briefing sets out key facts about the Scottish Local Authority Remuneration Committee (known as 'SLARC') recommendations

What is SLARC?

SLARC stands for the Scottish Local Authority Remuneration Committee. The Committee is fully independent and publicly appointed. It was reconvened in 2023 to undertake an independent review of Councillor Remuneration (often referred to as 'Councillor pay').

The Committee is made up of experts from across local government and the public sector, with expertise in a number of areas including local government finance, equalities and Human Resources. [You can read more about the committee and how they came to their recommendations in the SLARC Recommendations Report, which can be found here.](#)



Why do we say 'Remuneration' instead of 'Pay'?

Councillors are not paid employees, don't have a formal contract or set hours of work. Rather than a normal 'salary' they receive compensation for the role they do as a locally elected representative. The SLARC report highlighted the significant hours many Councillors do, which mean they are often unable to take on any other forms of work on top of their Councillor duties. The majority of Councillors do not hold other jobs.

This is especially true for female Councillors, who often have the role of a main carer for children and other family members. As well as better reflecting the complex role of modern Councillors, the increase suggested by SLARC is intended to attract and retain Councillors who far better reflect and represent the diversity in our communities.

It is COSLA's view that anyone who wants to run for elected office should be able to without being excluded due to their financial or other circumstances, and that's one of the reasons we welcomed the independent SLARC recommendations.



Did Councillors or COSLA vote for a pay rise?

No – the independent SLARC committee made recommendations to the Scottish Government which have been accepted by Ministers and implemented through the parliamentary process, following the same steps as any new legislation. COSLA welcomed and endorsed the recommendations.

Beyond the number of Senior Councillors who are appointed, Councils cannot influence the remuneration

The Scottish Government has fully funded the uplift set out in the SLARC regulations for the year 2025/2026 in their recent Budget

Councils are legally bound to implement the regulations as set out by the Scottish Parliament



Are Councillors receiving more money for the same role?

No – the role of a Councillor has changed significantly, and the independent SLARC acknowledged this after undertaking significant research.

Before this, Councillors' conditions hadn't changed since 2007. SLARC have conducted a much-needed reassessment of the Councillor role, assessing the legislative changes that have significantly impacted their workload and the expectations of Councillors in their role.

The last implemented review was in 2007 and a subsequent review in 2011 was not taken forward. This means it has been almost 20 years since the last time there was a change in conditions for our locally elected Councillors

The decision to uplift Councillor remuneration was based on a wider set of recommendations with provisions to ensure that Councillors are fulfilling their duties, this includes reporting on training

SLARC's role wasn't just about how much remuneration Councillors receive – but about assessing the role and demands of a modern Councillor



Did Councils vote on an increase for Council Leaders or Senior Councillors?

No – Council Leaders' Remuneration is linked to MSPs and is based on the size of the local authority. Councils can decide on the number of Senior Councillors they appoint, but the level of remuneration was set based on the recommendation of SLARC, which was accepted and implemented by Scottish Government and due parliamentary process.

The role of a Council Leader is highly complex

There are several factors that have led to changes in the workload of Councillors and Leaders, including a decade of financial challenges, national policy and legislative changes, increased public expectations and a huge increase in social media use and online communication

According to the SLARC Recommendations Report, some local authorities' Senior Councillors were required to lead on several policy areas. The recommendations reflected the additional pressure on Senior Councillors, whose conditions haven't changed since 2007



If the recommendations were already implemented, why is this in the news now?

Increases in Councillor Remuneration have been widely reported because Councils have recently set their budgets. This means that Councillor Remuneration has been on the Agenda at many all-council meetings across Scotland.

The rate of Councillor Remuneration is set in legislation and not by Councils. Councils are not voting on the amount the Remuneration is increasing by, or whether or not Councillors receive this increase. Elected officials can of course discuss these recommendations and changes as part of the normal course of a Council meeting.

Councillors can vote on the number of Senior Councillors appointed in their area.

How well are Scotland's communities reflected by our local Councils?



Research shows that currently, Scottish Councillors do not reflect the different people and groups who make up our communities.

Only 36% of councillors are female, with 56% of councillors over 55, and councillors far less likely to have a disability compared to the public

The current level of Remuneration Councillors receive was one of the biggest barriers to running as an elected councillor for these groups

The SLARC report aims to tackle the under-representation and increase diversity of elected members

Evidence from Elect Her/ Engender, SLARC and the Jo Cox Civility Commission show that abuse and intimidation of elected members is a key barrier to election and retention of those from underrepresented groups:

- [SLARC Recommendations for Councillors' Remuneration and Expenses](#) (PDF)
- [Jo Cox Civility Commission recommendations](#) (PDF)
- [Engender / Elect Her Womens Equal Representation in Scotland](#) (PDF)



COSLA

info@cosla.gov.uk
www.cosla.gov.uk