

The Scheme for Payment of Members' Allowances 2009/10

Report of the Clerk

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1 Purpose of Report

This report asks the Fire Authority formally to agree it's 2009/10 Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances and to note that an Independent Remuneration Panel will carry out a full review of the Scheme in autumn 2009.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Maintain the current Scheme for Payment of Members' Allowances, whereby basic, special responsibility, co-optee and travel allowances will increase automatically by the percentage agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services with effect from 1 April 2009; and
- b) Note that an Independent Remuneration Panel will carry out a full review of the Scheme in autumn 2009.

3 Background

On 1 May 2003 the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 came into force, which required combined fire authorities to establish their own schemes of allowances, so replacing the existing practice whereby Members were paid allowances for their fire authority duties by their constituent authorities.

At its Annual Meeting in July 2003 Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority agreed its first Scheme for Payment of Members' Allowances and since then, in accordance with the Regulations, it has agreed a Scheme each year.

In 2004, although not required to do so by legislation, the Fire Authority established an Independent Remuneration Panel on Members' Allowances to review the allowances paid to its Members. This was at no cost to the Authority and ensured that any review of the Scheme was objective.

In autumn 2006, following significant changes to the Fire Authority's organisational structure, the Panel conducted a full review of Members' allowances. At its meeting in December 2006 the Authority considered and agreed, with some modifications, the recommendations of the Panel. One of those recommendations was that a further review of Members' allowances would be conducted by the Panel in autumn 2008. It was subsequently agreed that this review should be deferred until autumn 2009.

4 The 2009/10 Scheme

Under the Regulations referred to in section 3 of this report the Fire Authority is required each year to make a scheme for the payment of allowances to its Members.

Section 14 of the Fire Authority's Scheme states that the basic and special responsibility allowances may be reviewed annually from 1 April each year based on the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services' annual pay reviews, and any percentage increase applied automatically from that date. It is, therefore, proposed that, for the 2009/10 Scheme, the allowances payable are increased by the percentage rate still to be agreed by the NJC in 2009, with the increases backdated to 1 April 2009.

It is also proposed that travel allowances are amended in line with the rates, which have already been agreed by the NJC with effect from 1 April 2009. In some instances, because of the decrease in the price of fuel, mileage allowances have reduced.

Although subsistence allowances have not been increased for a number of years, it is proposed that the current rates are maintained. The Independent Remuneration Panel will then be asked to include these allowances in its review.

5 Review by the Independent Remuneration Panel

The Independent Remuneration Panel has agreed to carry out a full review of all Member allowances in autumn 2009 and work has already commenced. A full report on the Panel's review and recommendations will be brought to the December 2009 meeting of the Fire Authority.

6 Financial Comment

The cost of applying any increase to be agreed by the NJC is as yet unknown but it is likely that it can be met from the pay and prices contingency in the 2009/10 budget.

7 Legal Comment

Under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 the Fire Authority is required to establish annually a scheme to provide for the payment of a basic annual allowance to each of its Members. That scheme may also provide for the payment of special responsibility allowances, allowances to co-optees serving on committees, and travel and subsistence allowances. Arrangements for the publication of the scheme shall be made as soon as reasonably practicable after the making or amendment of the scheme.

8 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have decided that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

9 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

10 Background Papers

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

1 May 2003 Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balance Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Equality and Diversity	*	Retained	
Efficiency Savings		Risk and Insurance	
Environmental		Staff	
Financial	*	Strategic Planning	
Fire Control/Fire Link		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Information Communications Technology and Data		Equality Impact Assessment	*