

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE			
MEETING OF THE:	AUTHORITY (ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING)		
DATE:	10 JUNE 2021	REPORT NO:	CFO/034/21
PRESENTING OFFICER	ACTING MONITORING OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	RIA GROVES	REPORT AUTHOR:	GEMMA SUNG
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM		
TITLE OF REPORT:	SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES 2021-221/22		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A:	DRAFT MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES
	APPENDIX B:	MEMBERS ALLOWANCE PAY RATES
	APPENDIX C:	REVISED MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE PAY RATES 2021/22

Purpose of Report

1. To request that the Authority reviews the current Scheme of Members' Allowances; and makes recommendations on any changes it wishes to make to the Scheme.

Recommendation

2. That Members;
 - a. Confirm continuation with its current Members' Allowance Scheme, or:
 - b. Identify any variations to the Scheme they may wish to implement, in line with the structure of the Authority (which is being considered as a separate report on this agenda).
 - c. Note that any inflationary increase to the Authority's Scheme of Members' Allowances is normally aligned to the previous year's Firefighters' pay. However, at the Authority's Budget meeting on 25th February 2021 Members resolved to freeze all 2021/22 member allowances for the thirteenth consecutive year.
 - d. Confirm their intention to either accept or reject any pay increases in line with Firefighters Pay Award for 2021/22 which would apply to 2022/23 allowances.

- e. Consider and confirm if they are content for the combined roles of Co-opted Member:
- i. to be appointed to both the Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committee, as a non-voting member (subject to approval of Structure).
 - ii. to continue to consider any complaints against Members, alleged to have breached the Members' Code of Conduct and Relevant Officers under the Relevant Officers Disciplinary Procedure on the Independent Panel as the "Independent Person"
 - iii. To be paid for conducting such roles following submission and verification of invoices, at a daily attendance rate of £50 (as and when required) as is the current case.

Introduction and Background

3. The Authority's draft Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2021/22 is attached at Appendix A. The Scheme adopted by the Authority on 22nd November 2004, was approved to take effect on 1st April 2005 and was subsequently confirmed at the Annual Meetings in 2006, 2007 and 2008.
4. In 2009 the Authority agreed an amendment to the Scheme of Allowances to include the addition of a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) of 50% of the basic allowance, for Members appointed as Deputy Group Leaders, should their group wish to appoint a Member to that position, on the proviso that such allowance would not be payable where an SRA is also payable for performing the role of Vice Chair of the Authority.
5. The Authority also agreed that Members entitled to SRA's for the role of "Chair" or additional responsibilities such as Lead Member, would only be entitled to receive one SRA payment.
6. As the SRA payment for a Deputy Group Leader had not been paid since 2011/12; and as the proportion of Opposition Members appointed to the Authority did not form any single political group, it was agreed by the Authority at the AGM on 11th June 2015, that the SRA payment for Deputy Group Leader, be removed from the Scheme of Members Allowances for 2015/16.
7. In addition, it was also agreed at the AGM 11th June 2015 that the SRA payment for Opposition Spokesperson, only be paid to one Opposition Member.
8. A slight amendment was made to the Scheme of Allowances for 2018/19, in relation to Schedule 1 – "Special Responsibility Allowances". It was agreed that the "Sub-Committee Chair" Allowance be removed and 2 levels of "Chair Allowance" created. For Committees comprising of 7 or more Members, the Chair's Allowance will be paid at a higher rate of £6,035p.a. For Committees of

6 Members or less, the Chair's Allowance will be paid at the lower rate of £4,053p.a. (the same rate as the previous "Sub-Committee Chair" Allowance).

9. No further changes were made to the Members' Allowance Scheme in 2020/21.
10. Members will recall that the Localism Act 2011 requires that an Independent Person (IP) be appointed to consider any complaints made against Elected Members. The Authority considered entering into a shared arrangement with another Authority however it was not possible for practical reasons to achieve this outcome.
11. At the Annual Meeting 2013 the Authority considered and approved a job description for the role of Independent Person, as although no complaints have been received over the past few years, the importance of having someone available to undertake this role if required was recognised.
12. Furthermore, Members will recall that the National Framework for England requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to involve their communities in planning and to have effective scrutiny arrangements in place with independence in the process. In 2012 the LGA Peer Challenge report recommended that more independent scrutiny would give increased public assurance. A number of options were considered to provide this type of independent scrutiny, including sharing arrangements with other FRA's. However, most other FRA's had their own arrangements in place and therefore, the Authority approved at its Annual Meeting 2013, the role and responsibilities for an appointed Co-opted Member to sit on the then Performance and Scrutiny Committee, without voting rights, to provide an impartial and independent view to this Committee.
13. Since October 2013, Mr Anthony Boyle has been undertaking the roles of Independent Person and Co-opted Member under the title of "Independent Person".
14. The Authority is requested to consider whether the combined undertaking of these roles by the appointed individual has had any significant effect upon the Authority, which may justify terminating the arrangement; and if there is no just cause, confirm the continuation of the combined arrangements for 2021/22.
15. It is proposed that Mr Boyle continues to be Co-opted onto both the Audit Committee and the Scrutiny Committee in the same capacity as he is at present.
16. The Scheme provides for payment of a basic allowance to all Councillors calculated at £8,070 from 1st April 2010 (in line with Firefighters pay award of the previous July). There was a pay freeze for Firefighters from 2010 until 2012; and 1% increases to Firefighters pay each year since. However, each year, the Authority has resolved not to take these 1% increases to their allowances.
17. Furthermore, Firefighters were awarded a 2% pay increase in July 2020, however at the Authority's Budget meeting on 25th February 2021, Members

resolved to freeze all 2021/22 Member allowances for the thirteenth consecutive year.

18. Members will consider the Structure of the Authority for 2021/22 within a separate report on the Agenda.

Equality and Diversity Implications

19. All Members are entitled to the same Basic Allowance; and SRA's are paid to Members for performing approved special responsibilities by reference to proportions of basic allowance.

Staff Implications

20. There are no staff implications arising directly from this report. This report relates to Members Allowances only.

Legal Implications

21. The Local Government Act 1972 and the Members Allowances (England) Regulations 2003, provide that a Scheme of Allowances is required and reviewed every year.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

22. The Authority is fully committed to reducing its own costs as the organisation faces up to the Government cuts and what that means for local services. The Authority had already made reductions in its allowances of £24,000 and the Authority will again freeze all member allowances for the thirteenth consecutive year.
23. The Members Allowance Budget for 2020/21 is now set at £199,900 plus £8,100 for national insurance costs.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

24. There are no risk management, health and safety, or environmental implications arising directly from this report.

Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*

25. Payment of allowances at reasonable rates will ensure that Members are able to effectively perform their functions, in leading and setting the mission, policies and objectives for the Authority to achieve.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

IP	Independent Person
FRA'S	Fire & Rescue Authorities
LGA	Local Government Association
SRA	Special Responsibility Allowance