

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING		
DATE:	11TH JUNE 2015	REPORT NO:	CFO/050/15
PRESENTING OFFICER	MONITORING OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	JANET HENSHAW	REPORT AUTHOR:	KELLY KELLAWAY - DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER EXT 4113
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	HELEN JONES: PAYROLL MANAGER		
TITLE OF REPORT:	SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES 2015/16		

APPENDICES:	<p>A: DRAFT MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES</p> <p>B: MEMBERS ALLOWANCE PAY RATE 2014/15</p> <p>C: REVISED MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES PAY RATE 2015/16 IN LINE WITH PROPOSED STRUCTURE (AS PER SEPARATE REPORT ON THIS AGENDA)</p>
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Purpose of Report

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

Recommendation

2. That the Authority:
 - a. Confirms continuation with its current Members' Allowances Scheme or;
 - b. Identifies any variations to the Scheme it 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 Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority's Scheme of Members Allowances is normally aligned to the previous year's Firefighters' pay, which was awarded an increase of 1% in July 2014. However, at the Authority's AGM on 26th June 2014, Members

confirmed their intention to reject any pay increase in line with Firefighters Pay award for 2014/15, which would have applied to the 2015/16 Allowances;

- d. Confirm their intention to either accept or reject any pay increase in line with Firefighters pay award for 2015/16 (subject to National agreement). This would apply to 2016/17 allowances;
- e. Consider and confirm if they are content for the combined roles of Co-opted Member (appointed to Performance and Scrutiny Committee as a none voting Member), and Independent Person (to consider any complaints against Members, alleged to have breached the Members Code of Conduct), to continue to be undertaken by Mr Anthony Boyle as 'Independent Person', and payment for conducting such roles be paid following submission and verification of invoices, at a daily attendance rate of £50 (as and when required);
- f. Given the current political balance of the Authority and in line with the Authority's decision to reduce its Members Allowances Budget by 10% over four years from 2013/14, approve that the Special Responsibility Allowance payment for Opposition Spokespersons, be paid to only one Opposition Member.
- g. Approve the deletion of the Deputy Group Leaders Allowance from the Scheme of Members Allowances for 2015/16.

Introduction and Background

- 3. The Authority's draft Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2015/16 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 2005, 2006, 2007, 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 a 'Chair' or additional responsibilities such as a Lead Member would only be entitled to receive one SRA payment. Therefore if a Member holds the position of Chair of more than one Committee, they will only receive the SRA for one role as opposed to two. This rule also applies to those appointed with additional responsibilities such as a Lead Member.
- 6. The SRA Payment for a Deputy Group Leader has not been paid since 2011/12. As the proportion of Opposition Members appointed to the Authority

do not form any single political group, it is recommended that the Scheme of Members Allowances for 2015/16, is amended to remove the provision of an SRA Payment for a Deputy Group Leader.

7. 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 in the area, however it was not possible for practical reasons to achieve this outcome.
8. 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, they recognised the importance of having someone available to undertake this role if required.
9. 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 view 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 Performance and Scrutiny Committee, without voting rights, to provide an impartial and independent view to this Committee.
10. Since October 2013, Mr Anthony Boyle has been undertaking the roles of Independent Person and Co-opted Member under the title of 'Independent Person'.
11. 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 2015/16.
12. 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 in 2012 and 2013. However the Authority resolved not to take these 1% increases to their allowances at the Annual General Meetings on 11th June 2013 and 26th June 2014.
13. Furthermore, Firefighters were awarded a 1% pay increase in July 2014, however at its AGM on 26th June 2014, the Authority confirmed their intention to reject the expected pay award in relation to their Scheme of Allowances, which would have been applied to their allowances for 2015/16.
14. Members will consider the Structure of the Authority as a separate report on the Agenda. It is proposed however, that the structure for 2015/16 be amended

with the deletion of the Consultation & Negotiation Sub-Committee. This will reduce by one, the number of SRA payments for Sub-Committee Chairs, at a rate of £4,035 per year. However, it is proposed that this reduction be used to fund 2 additional “Member Ambassador” Roles, which will each be paid an SRA Payment of £2,018 per year. Therefore, the proposed changes above will be cost neutral.

15. It is also proposed that the SRA payment of £2,018 per year for Opposition Spokespersons, will only be paid to one Opposition Member, resulting in a saving of £2,018 per year.

Equality and Diversity Implications

16. 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 allowances.

Staff Implications

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

Legal Implications

18. 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

19. The Authority resolved to achieve a 10% saving over a 4 year period, of the Members Allowance Budget which was set at £240k, as part of the budget setting at the Budget Authority meeting on 26th February 2014. The Current Members Allowance Budget is currently set at approximately £230k
20. The proposed reduction in the number of Opposition Spokesperson payments will meet the 10% saving target for 2015/16.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

21. 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*

22. 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