

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO: Meeting of the	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY ANNUAL MEETING
DATE:	11TH JUNE 2013
REPORT NO.	CFO/067/13
REPORTING OFFICER:	JANET HENSHAW – CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY
CONTACT OFFICER:	KELLY JOHNSON – ACTING DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER – EXT 4113
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	
SUBJECT:	SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2013/14

APPENDIX A	TITLE	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES – AGREED JUNE 2009
APPENDIX B	TITLE	MEMBERS ALLOWANCE PAY RATE
APPENDIX C	TITLE	REVISED SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE IN LINE WITH PROPOSED NEW STRUCTURE (AS PER SEPARATE REPORT ON THIS AGENDA)
APPENDIX D	TITLE	COMPARISON FIGURES CURRENT / NEW ALLOWANCES
APPENDIX E	TITLE	INDEPENDENT PERSON JOB DESCRIPTION AND SPECIFICATION
APPENDIX F	TITLE	CO OPTED MEMBER ROLE/RESPONSIBILITIES

ATTACHED – HARD COPY

***There is a Glossary of Terms at the end of this report for your information**

Purpose of Report

1. To request the Authority to review the current Members' Allowances Scheme, and any make recommendation for any changes it wishes to make to the Scheme.

Recommendation

2. That Members:
 - (a) Continues with its current Members' Allowances Scheme or;
 - (b) Identifies any variations to the Scheme it may wish to be implemented, in line with the structure of the Authority which is being considered as a separate

report on this agenda. (for example in respect of arrangements for special responsibility payments in relation to various roles Members are appointed to),

- (c) Approve either an increase in allowances in line with the FireFighters' pay award in or a freeze in current allowances,
- (d) Approve the appointment of an Independent Person, to be advertised locally and interviewed, in order to provide a service as and when required by the Localism Act 2011,
- (e) Approve the appointment of a co-opted Member to sit on the Performance and Scrutiny Committee in a non-voting capacity under the terms set out in the job role and responsibilities.

Introduction & Background

3. The Authority's current Scheme for Members' Allowances is attached as Appendix A. The Scheme was adopted by the Authority on 22nd November 2004 was approved to take effect on 1st April 2005 and subsequently confirmed at the Annual Meeting in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 .
4. In 2009 the Authority agreed an amendment to the Scheme of Allowances to include a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA), for Members appointed as Deputy Group Leaders, should their group wish to appoint a Member to the position Deputy Leader and, with the provision 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 rate of the Deputy Group Leader SRA is 50% of the Basic Allowance, and currently matches that allowance for the Chair of a Committee.
6. The Authority also agreed that Members entitled to Special Responsibility Allowances for the role of a 'Chair' or additional responsibilities such as a Scrutiny Member would only be entitled to each type of SRA once. 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 Sponsor.
7. Members will recall that the Localism Act 2011 requires that an Independent Person (IP) be appointed to consider any complaints in respect of elected Members. It had been initially proposed that a shared arrangement with another Authority in the area could be considered. However this has not been possible to achieve for practical reasons.
8. Although no complaints have been received over the past year, it is nevertheless important that someone is available to undertake this role if required. It is therefore proposed that an IP be appointed for MFRA to be paid at an hourly rate plus travel expenses, who will undertake this work as and when necessary. A draft Job Description and Specification are attached at Appendix E.

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 have been considered to provide this type of independent view including sharing arrangements with other FRA's. However most other FRA's have their arrangements in place and therefore it is recommended that a co-opted Member to sit on the Performance and Scrutiny Committee but without voting rights is appointed, to give an impartial and independent view to this committee. A draft Role and Responsibilities document is attached as Appendix F.
10. 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 has been a pay freeze since 2010 until 2012 however there was an increase to Firefighter pay in 2012 of 1%. Therefore the basic rate and Special Responsibility Allowances in respect of specified roles, which are linked to proportions of the basic allowance, would increase by the same percentage unless Members resolve otherwise.
8. Appendix C sets out proposed Members Allowance Pay Rates to reflect report CFO/058/13 and the proposed new Structure of the Authority, (considered earlier on this meeting's Agenda) for Members consideration. This would see a possible reduction in Allowance payments of approximately £9,791, as detailed in Appendix D.

Equality & Diversity Implications

9. All Members are entitled to the same Basic Allowance, and Special Responsibility Allowances are paid to Members for performing approved special responsibilities by reference to proportions of basic allowances.

Staff Implications

10. There are no Staff Implications arising directly from this report. This report relates to members Allowances only.

Legal Implications

11. 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

12. The budgeted cost of Members Allowances based on the current scheme is £240k, whilst the changes proposed in the structure would reduce this by approximately £10k in this financial year. At the Budget Authority Meeting on 26th February 2013, Members approved a 10% saving in Members Allowances over 3 years. This reduction will meet the savings target for the current financial year.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

13. None arising directly from this report.

Contribution to Our Mission – To Achieve; Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters”

17. Payment of allowances at reasonable rates will ensure that Members are able to perform their functions in leading and setting the Mission, policy and objectives for the Authority to achieve.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

CFO/058/13 Structure Of The Authority.

***Glossary of Terms**

CLG = Communities & Local Government
SRA = Special Responsibility Allowance