

**REPORT AUTHOR:** MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2024/25

**Author and contact:** Nicky Upton, Business Support Manager, [Democratic.Services@Bedshire.gov.uk](mailto:Democratic.Services@Bedshire.gov.uk)

Background Papers: None

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Proposed Scheme of Members Allowances 2024/25	N/A

**Implications**

This table provides a short statement of the impact of the recommendations in this report and/or a reference to the relevant paragraph/s in the report.

Will this report affect any of the following?

	Yes / No	Impact / Reference
Financial Implications	Yes	The current budget for Members' Allowances (Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances) is £84,900, including National Insurance. Costs will be incurred in publishing a notice that the Authority has made a Scheme of Members' Allowances in a newspaper circulating in its area. The cost last year was £1,639.
Risk Management	No	

Legal Implications	Yes	The making or amendment of the Members' Scheme of Allowances is a function reserved to the full Fire Authority. An amendment may be made by the Fire Authority in year. Regulation 10(4) of Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 provides that "a scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index as may be specified by the authority and where the only change made to a scheme in any year is that effected by such annual adjustment in accordance with such index the scheme shall be deemed not to have been amended."
Privacy and Security Implications	No	
Duty to Collaborate	Yes	The making of a Scheme of Allowances is the responsibility of each individual authority defined in the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulation 2003; the methodology is prescribed exclusively by those regulations.
Health and Safety Implications	No	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Yes	The Authority's Scheme of Members' Allowances does not include any element for meeting costs incurred by a Member who has to arrange care in order to carry out their function as a Member of the Fire Authority. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 exclude the Authority from including such a provision in its Scheme. However, all Members are appointed by principal councils and are entitled to claim "dependent carers' allowances" from their appointing authority. There are currently no co-opted members on the Authority.
Environmental Sustainability	No	
Consultation and Communication	Yes	A notice that the Authority has made a Scheme of Members' Allowances will be published in a couple of local newspapers in order to cover the whole area. The updated Scheme of Members' Allowances can also be inspected at Headquarters, during standard office hours or downloaded from the website: <a href="http://www.bedsfire.gov.uk">www.bedsfire.gov.uk</a>

## **PURPOSE:**

To approve the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2024/25.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Members' Allowances Scheme be updated from 1 April 2024 in accordance with the proposals set out in this report and that the Scheme be adopted for the financial year 24/25.

---

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Fire Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme (the Scheme) was introduced on 1 January 2004 in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The Fire Authority (FRA) approves the Scheme annually.
- 1.2 The Scheme was fully reviewed by Members at their meeting on 9 February 2007, when it was agreed that in future Member allowances would be based on a daily rate of mean weekly earnings advised by the Local Government Association (LGA) multiplied by an assessment of days required to perform each Member's tasks.
- 1.3 At its meeting on 11 December 2013, the FRA agreed that in the absence of LGA Member rates information, the Local Annual Government Pay Settlement would be applied to Members' allowances effective from April 2013 and each year since then the allowances have been updated in the same way.
- 1.4 At its meeting on 18 July 2019, the Fire Authority reviewed the Special Responsibility Allowances payable under the Scheme in the light of the Governance Review that had taken place and reduced the allowances payable to the Chair, Vice-Chair and Executive Members.

### 2. Current Scheme – Summary

- 2.1 The current Scheme is detailed in the Members' Handbook and included on the Authority's website.
- 2.2 The current daily rate is £189.38. In accordance with previous practice this rate will be adjusted in line with the Local Government Pay Settlement from April 2024 once the NJC has negotiated a pay agreement. In the last couple of years, a settlement has not been reached until nearer November. Any pay increase will then be applied and backdated to April.

2.3 The following assessment of days applies to each Member's tasks:

2.3.1 *Basic Allowance:*

In addition to the agendas, reports and attendance relating to scheduled meetings of the Fire Authority (FRA), Members are required to attend budget workshops, station visits, training and official functions.

All Members (12)	20 days
------------------	---------

2.3.2 *Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs):*

The FRA may pay SRAs to FRA members who carry out responsibilities specified in the Regulations. The Scheme provides for the following members to receive a special responsibility allowance based on an assessment (shown below) of the number of days they will need to spend during the year carrying out their special responsibilities:

FRA Chair	80 days
FRA Vice Chair	30 days
FRA Executive Member	6 days
Chair of Audit and Standards Committee	6 days

In addition to the duties of a basic Member, the Chair, Vice Chair and Executive Members undertake additional responsibilities including: attending regional meetings, LGA meetings, audit meetings etc, together with ad-hoc Appointment Panels, Statement of Accounts signing etc, and taking decisions in between meetings of the FRA.

On 16 July 2020 the FRA agreed that each member of the Executive Committee should take responsibility for a specific area of activity or portfolio. The current portfolios are as follows:

- Prevention and Protection;
- Emergency Response;
- People and Culture;
- Physical and Digital Assets;
- Finance, Productivity and Efficiency;

The Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee presides at meetings of the Audit and Standards Committee and acts as a substitute Member with regard to ad hoc Appointment Panels, etc, and consultation on decision making between meetings of the FRA.

On 4 September 2019, the Fire Authority considered whether a Member should be able to receive more than one SRA. Although there is no prohibition in the Regulations, it is the practice at the 3 constituent authorities that no Councillor may receive more than one SRA and is included as a provision in their Schemes. A similar prohibition is included in the proposed Scheme. The Regulations require that the Scheme which includes SRAs must provide that where members are divided into at least two political groups and a majority of members belong to the same group (“the controlling group”), an SRA must be paid to at least one person who is not a member of the controlling group.

### 3. Standards Provision

3.1 Since 1 July 2012, the Audit and Standards Committee has been responsible for ethical standards.

3.2 The FRA is required to appoint at least one independent person who must be consulted when the FRA investigates complaints made against its members. The FRA has agreed to collaborate with neighbouring authorities in the appointment of a joint panel of independent persons. Each independent person receives a nominal annual retainer of £300 and a flat payment of £75 for each case the independent person handles. The costs of the retainers are shared with the other partner authorities, but the case fees are met by the relevant authority.

### 4. Updating the Scheme for 2024/25

4.1 As outlined in paragraph 1.3, it has been the FRA’s policy in recent years to increase allowances in line with the Local Government Pay Settlement. In the event that the Local Government Pay Settlement is not a single percentage pay settlement agreed for all officers for 2024/25, a further report will be submitted to the full Authority for it to determine a percentage uplift to Members’ Allowances.

4.2 The 2024/25 Members’ basic allowance will be paid from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 with Special Responsibility Allowances being paid from the date of the June 2024 Annual Meeting.

4.3 Members are also requested to agree that subsistence remains unchanged, and that the mileage rate payable to Members continues to be the same rate that is payable to employees covered by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services.

5. Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panels

5.1 When making or amending its Scheme of Members Allowances the FRA is required to adopt a Scheme of Members' Allowances before 1 April each year and, in so doing, have due regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs) of the constituent authorities when considering its own Scheme of Members' Allowances and confirm that it has done so when it gives public notice of the Scheme of Allowances. Links to the most recent recommendations of the respective IRPs are below:

Bedford Borough Council:	<a href="#"><u>Independent Remuneration Panel 11 October 2023 and minutes - as report not agreed in its entirety</u></a>
Luton Borough Council:	<a href="#"><u>Independent Remuneration Panel 2024-25</u></a>
Central Beds Council:	<a href="#"><u>Independent Remuneration Panel 17 February 2020</u></a>

**GRAHAM BRITTEN**  
**MONITORING OFFICER**