

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
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REPORT AUTHOR: SECRETARY/MONITORING OFFICER

SUBJECT: MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2020/21

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Background Papers: None

Implications

LEGAL		FINANCIAL	
HUMAN RESOURCES		EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	
COPRPORATE RISK	Known	OTHER (please specify)	
	New		

Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report

PURPOSE:

To review the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2020/21.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Members' Allowances Scheme be updated from 1 June 2020 in accordance with the proposals set out in this report and that the Scheme be adopted for the financial year 2020/21 subject to any amendments that may be agreed following the FRA's further consideration of the Governance Review at its meeting on 30 April 2020.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Fire Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme (the Scheme) was introduced on 1 January 2004. The Fire Authority (FRA) reviews 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 15 December 2016, the Fire Authority reviewed and amended the Special Responsibility Allowances.
- 1.5 A report on Members' Allowances for 2019/20 was presented at the FRA's meeting on 13 December 2018 when it was decided to defer any decision until the outcome of the Governance Review was known.
- 1.6 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 £167.32. In accordance with previous practice this rate will be adjusted in line with the Local Government Pay Settlement in April 2020.

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

2.3.1 *All Members 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
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2.3.2 *Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs):*

The FRA may pay SRAs to FRA members who carry out responsibilities specified in the Regulations. Under the Scheme SRAs are payable to the Chair, Vice Chair, Executive Members and the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee.

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.

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.

Following discussion at the Members Development Day on 2 July 2019 in connection with the Governance Review, it was proposed that the Policy and Challenge Groups should be suspended on a trial basis, that two additional FRA meetings would be added to the calendar and that the Executive Committee would continue in its current format as decided at the Annual Meeting held on 6 June 2019. It was also suggested that the Member who attends meetings of the Collaboration Group should receive an SRA to acknowledge the additional work involved. These proposals were formally adopted by the FRA on 18 July 2019.

On 4 September 2019, the Fire Authority considered whether a Member should be able to receive more than one SRA. Although there was no provision in the Regulations covering this question, it was general practice for local authorities to include a provision

in their Schemes providing that members can receive no more than one SRA and the Fire Authority agreed to include this restriction in its Scheme.

FRA Chair	80 days
FRA Vice Chair	30 days
FRA Executive Member	6 days
Chair of Audit and Standards Committee	6 days
Collaboration Working Group	3 days

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.
- 3.3 In September 2016 the FRA appointed two independent persons jointly with Bedford Borough Council. Each Independent Person receives a nominal annual retainer of £300 and a flat payment of £50 for each case the independent person handles. The cost of the retainers are shared with Bedford, but the case fees are met by the relevant authority.

4. Updating the Scheme for 2020/21

- 4.1 As outlined in paragraph 1.3, it has been the FRAs policy in recent years to increase allowances in line with the Local Government Pay Settlement.
- 4.2 The 2020/21 Members Allowance will be paid from 1 June 2020 to 31 May 2021 with Special Responsibility Allowances being paid from the date of the June 2019 Annual General Meeting.
- 4.3 Members are also requested to agree that subsistence and carers' allowances remain 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.

- 4.4 The Policy and Challenge Groups are currently suspended with the above interim changes being applied in July 2019. There may, therefore, be the need for further amendments during the course of 2020/21 dependent on the outcome of the governance review which will be considered at the 30 April 2020 meeting.
5. Legal Implications
- 5.1 The payment of allowances to Members of the FRA is governed by The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and the FRA's Scheme of Allowances complies with those regulations.
6. Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panels
- 6.1 When making or amending its Scheme of Members Allowances the FRA is required to have regard to any relevant recommendations made by to the constituent local authorities by their Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs). At the time of writing there have been no recent recommendations submitted to the constituent local authorities. In February 2019, the IRP for Bedford Borough Council recommended that the basic allowance should remain unchanged but that the SRAs should be increased by 2% in line with the NJC pay award. In March 2019, the IRP for Luton Borough Council recommended that there should be no change to the basic allowance or to SRAs. Central Bedfordshire Council expects to receive a report from its IRP in February 2020.

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