

By: Clerk to the Authority

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 16 October
2013

Subject: REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

To report the outcome of the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme and to recommend that the Authority should adopt the proposed revised Scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Approve the revised Members' Allowances Scheme as set out in **Appendix 3** to this report, for implementation with effect from 1 November 2013.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Clerk to the Authority - Stuart Ballard
TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01622 692121 ext 8206
EMAIL: stuart.ballard@kent.fire-uk.org
BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

Background

1. At its last meeting on 13 June 2013 (Minute 11) the Authority decided to review its Members' Allowances Scheme, and Mrs Janet Waghorn was appointed as independent adviser to undertake the review.
2. The current scheme, showing the amounts previously agreed as payable for 2013/14, including the 1% increase recently applied as a result of the indexation of Members' allowances to the salaries of professional staff, is attached at **Appendix 1**. Members will recall that, at its meeting on 13 June 2013 (Minutes 9(2)(d) and 11(2)(b)), the Authority decided to make the following changes to the scheme pending the outcome of the review:-
 - (a) to defer the appointment of Member Champions for 2013/14;
 - (b) to restrict the SRAs relating to all Committee appointments to just one Chairman, one Vice- Chairman, and one Spokesperson from each of the Opposition Groups;
 - (c) to continue to pay the Vice-Chairman of the Authority an SRA at 50% of the Chairman's SRA, although the Vice-Chairman no longer chaired a Committee.
3. The reasons for reviewing the scheme at this time were as follows:-
 - (a) notwithstanding any indexation arrangements which may apply, the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require authorities to review their schemes at least once every four years, and the Authority's current scheme had been in operation since July 2009; and
 - (b) the Regulations require the Authority to "have regard" to the recommendations made to Kent County Council (KCC) and Medway Council by the Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs) established by those Councils. Both Council's IRPs had recently issued reports following comprehensive reviews of their schemes: Medway's in April 2012 and KCC's in May 2013; and
 - (c) because 21 of the Authority's 25 Members were appointed by KCC, and the KCC elections had recently taken place resulting in a substantial change in the membership of the Authority, this was effectively the start date of the Authority's four-year cycle.

Recommendations of Review

4. Mrs Waghorn has completed her review and her report setting out her findings and proposing adoption of a new scheme is attached at **Appendix 2**. Mrs Waghorn's recommendations can be summarised as follows:-
 - (a) Basic Allowance should remain unchanged (except for a slight rounding down to a round figure) at £1400.00 per annum;
 - (b) no change to the Chairman's Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) (except for a very minor rounding down to £18,360);
 - (c) Vice-Chairman's SRA should be set at 40% of the Chairman's, no matter what other posts the Vice-Chairman may hold;
 - (d) SRA for each of the Opposition Group Leaders should be set at 30% of the Chairman's, plus £300 for every Member of their Group in addition to themselves;
 - (e) the SRA for Opposition Committee Spokespersons should be abolished;
 - (f) the SRA for Member Champions should be abolished;
 - (g) for all other SRA holders, the percentage relationship with the Chairman's SRA should remain the same;
 - (h) the rule that no Member may receive more than one SRA should continue, and apply to all Members without any exceptions;
 - (i) indexation of allowances should be abolished and the new allowances fixed for four years, or until the next review, whichever is the sooner;
 - (j) no change to any other aspects of the scheme.
5. A recommended revised scheme for the remainder of 2013/14 and future years based on Mrs Waghorn's recommendations is attached at **Appendix 3**. To simplify the transition from the existing scheme to the new, it is recommended that the new scheme should take effect from 1 November 2013.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6. The Authority is required by law to review its Members' Allowances Scheme at least once every four years and, in doing so, to "have regard" to the recommendations made to KCC and Medway Council by the IRPs established by those councils. The latest review not only complies fully with the statutory requirements but, in the interests of public accountability and transparency, has been undertaken for the Authority by an independent person.
7. The new scheme proposed by Mrs Waghorn will result in a budget saving on Members' allowances of £7858.30 (8.14%) in a full year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Members are requested to:
 - 8.1 Approve the revised Members' Allowances Scheme as set out in **Appendix 3** to this report, for implementation with effect from 1 November 2013.