

By: Chief Executive

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority - 13 June 2013

Subject: REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

Classification: Unrestricted

## **FOR DECISION**

### **SUMMARY**

To recommend that the Authority should review its Members' Allowances Scheme forthwith and to propose arrangements for undertaking and implementing the outcome of such a review.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are requested to:

1. Agree that a full review of Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme should be undertaken over the Summer, with the outcome of the review being reported to the Authority meeting on 16 October (para 4 refers);
2. Agree that, pending the outcome of the review, Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) in relation to Committee appointments be restricted to one Chairman, one Vice-Chairman, and one Spokesperson from each opposition group; and that the Vice-Chairman of the Authority continue to receive an SRA of 50% of the Chairman's while also serving as Vice-Chairman of a main Committee (para 6 refers);
3. Approve the proposed arrangements for carrying out the review, including the appointment of Mrs Janet Waghorn as independent adviser to undertake the review (paras 3 and 4 refer).

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Clerk to the Authority - Stuart Ballard  
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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

## COMMENTS

### Need for Scheme to be Reviewed

1. Under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, the Authority is required to review its Members' Allowances Scheme at least once every four years. The current scheme is attached at **Appendix 1**. Although the scheme has been re-adopted each year, the scheme was last reviewed in detail in Summer 2009. The Authority therefore needs to carry out a further full review of the scheme in the near future.

### Suggested Process for Undertaking Review

2. Under the 2003 Regulations, combined fire authorities are not required to establish their own Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs) (as councils are), but they must "have regard" to the recommendations made to their constituent councils (Kent County Council (KCC) and Medway Council in the case of this Authority) by the IRPs established by those councils.
3. While the Regulations do not require combined fire authorities to establish their own IRPs, when the Authority's original Members' Allowances Scheme was prepared in 2003, and when it was reviewed in 2005 and 2009, the Authority decided that it ought to include some independent input in order to ensure objectivity and greater public acceptability. The current national economic situation makes it more essential than ever that this year's review should be undertaken by a knowledgeable but independent person. Accordingly, it is proposed that Mrs Janet Waghorn be asked to undertake this task. As well as being the Authority's Independent Person under the Localism Act 2011, Mrs Waghorn has worked in local government at a senior level and serves on the Independent Remuneration Panel of one of the Kent District Councils.
4. Mrs Waghorn's role would be to recommend to the Authority at its next meeting on 16 October 2013 a new Scheme of Members' Allowances taking into account all relevant information, including the following:-
  - (a) the requirements of the Regulations;
  - (b) experience from operation of the Authority's existing Members' Allowances Scheme;
  - (c) changes that have taken place to Members' roles since the existing scheme was agreed in 2009;
  - (d) the increase in the number of political party groups on the Authority from 3 to 4 as a result of the May 2013 KCC election;

- (e) the most recent recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panels of KCC and Medway Council to those councils, and the schemes subsequently adopted by those councils (see para 5 below);
  - (f) the schemes currently operated by other combined fire authorities in England.
5. Medway Council last reviewed its Members' Allowances Scheme in 2011/12 and the recommendations of its IRP were reported to the Council on 26 April 2012. Kent County Council has just completed its latest review and the recommendations of its IRP were reported to the Council on 23 May 2013.

### **Interim Arrangements**

6. In view of the current financial situation, it is proposed that, pending the outcome of the review, the three Member Champion posts should not be filled (as recommended in item B2 on the agenda), and that Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) in relation to Committee appointments should be restricted to one Chairman, one Vice-Chairman, and one Spokesperson from each opposition group (in addition to the SRAs for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Authority and for the three Opposition Group Leaders which would continue to be paid during the review). It is also proposed, pending the outcome of the review, that the Vice-Chairman of the Authority should continue to receive an SRA of 50% of the Chairman's while also serving as Vice-Chairman of a main Committee (and not just when serving as Chairman of a main Committee). This is to recognise the increased workload of the Vice-Chairman's role during the bedding-in period of the Authority's new political and committee structure.

### **IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7. 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. It is in the interests of public accountability and transparency for the Authority to commission a knowledgeable but independent person to undertake the review and make recommendations to the Authority in a public report.
8. Implementing the new scheme part way through 2013/14 could have budgetary implications, and the significance of these will need to be considered before any new scheme is adopted.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

9. Members are requested to:

- 9.1 Agree that a full review of Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme should be undertaken over the Summer, with the outcome of the review being reported to the Authority meeting on 16 October (para 4 refers);
- 9.2 Agree that, pending the outcome of the review, Special Responsibility Allowances in relation to Committee appointments be restricted to one Chairman, one Vice-Chairman, and one Spokesperson from each opposition group; and that the Vice-Chairman of the Authority continue to receive an SRA of 50% of the Chairman's while also serving as Vice-Chairman of a main Committee (para 6 refers);
- 9.3 Approve the proposed arrangements for carrying out the review, including the appointment of Mrs Waghorn as independent adviser to undertake the review (paras 3 - 4 refer).