

Report of Head of Legal Services

15. Members' Allowances Scheme 2015/16

Purpose of report

1. To consider whether to make any alterations to the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2015/16 in light of the lack of change in the Consumer Price Index to April 2015.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- i) the Members' Allowances Scheme 2015/16 (attached at Appendix 1), as amended be approved; and***
- ii) Members determine the level of Members' Allowances for 2015/16.***

Introduction and Background

2. The Authority is required to have a scheme for its Members to be paid a basic annual allowance, under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. Authorities may also make provision for other allowances, for example for those Members with special responsibilities or for travel and subsistence. The current budget for Members' Allowances is £50,300.
3. Prior to making or amending its scheme, the Authority must have regard to the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panels from which its Members are nominated i.e. Worcestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council.

Members' Allowances Scheme 2015/16

4. The proposed 2015/16 Scheme is attached at appendix 1. The following amendments have been made to provide greater clarity in terms of setting out the current conventions that have always occurred in practice:
 - i) Claims for travel expenses can only be made for journeys undertaken to enable Members to undertake approved duties.
 - ii) Claims for subsistence expenses can only be made for journeys undertaken to enable Members to undertake approved duties.
 - iii) Approved duties are:

- meetings of the Authority, it's committees, sub-committees, panels or working parties;
 - meetings of outside bodies to which a Member is appointed by the Authority, if that organisation does not pay Members' expenses;
 - Authority Member training seminars, events and workshops;
 - Chairman's briefing meetings;
 - meetings with Officers in connection with the functions of the Authority which have been convened by the Chief Fire Officer or a member of the Senior Management Board; or
 - any meeting or event as approved by the Authority or it's Committees.
- iv) Members can elect to forgo their entitlement or part of their entitlement to allowances if they so wish.

Consumer Price Index

5. On 16 June 2008 the Authority agreed to use the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the purpose of annually adjusting Members' Allowances. However the Authority has previously agreed not to take any CPI related increase since 2009. Both the Worcestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council Independent Remuneration Panels have recommended further use of the CPI until the end of the financial year 2016/17.
6. There has been no increase in the CPI for 2015/16 and therefore Members are asked to determine whether to make any alterations to the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2015/16.

Conclusion/Summary

7. The Members' Allowances Scheme 2015/16 incorporates various amendments that aim to provide greater clarity in terms of setting out the current conventions which have always occurred in practice.
8. The Independent Remuneration Panels have recommended the use of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to make annual adjustments to Members' Allowances until the end of 2016/17. However, there has been no increase in the CPI up to April 2015.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The current budget for Members' Allowances is £50,300.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	None directly.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	None directly.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	None.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	The basic allowance payable is determined by Regulation, however the current Members' Allowances Scheme also includes a Dependents' Carers' Allowance to assist those Members with caring responsibilities in carrying out their approved duties.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – draft Members' Allowances Scheme 2015/16

Background papers –

Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003

Fire Authority Report and Minutes – 9 June 2014

Contact Officer

Nigel Snape, Head of Legal Services

(01905 368242)

Email: nsnape@hwfire.org.uk