

AVON FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING:	Avon Fire Authority
MEETING DATE:	29 March 2023
REPORT OF:	The Clerk
SUBJECT:	Members' Allowances Scheme 2023/24

1. SUMMARY

This paper concerns the Members' Allowances Scheme:

- In accordance with Local Government legislation, the Fire Authority updates its Members' Allowances Scheme each financial year.
- The Scheme updates the basic allowance paid to Elected Members, special responsibility allowances, the Independent Person's allowance and travelling and subsistence allowances.
- The Scheme was independently reviewed by Bryony Houlden, Chief Executive of South West Councils and her report dated November 2021 was presented to the Fire Authority on 15 December 2021 when all eleven recommendations were approved.
- This 2023/24 Scheme incorporates the remaining changes recommended in that Independent Review for the 2023/24 financial year and NJC Green Book pay awards.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Approve the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023-24 (**Appendix 1**).

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, which was amended by the Local Government Act 2000, provisions were made in relation to the payment of allowances for Members of Local Authorities. Regulations made under these statutory provisions, require Local Authorities to make a 'scheme of allowances' for their Members.

- 3.2 The Members' Allowances Scheme is increased annually in accordance with the National Joint Council for Local Government Services terms and conditions (Green Book) pay award.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report has financial implications in the table below for '23/24', which were set out in the report to the Fire Authority meeting of 15 December 2021, when the Fire Authority approved the changes recommended by the Independent Review of Member Allowances.

- 4.2 In addition to the changes recommended by the Independent Review, Member allowances also track the pay increases awarded by the NJC for Green Book local government staff. The pay award for 1 April 2022 was announced on 1 November 2022 and allowances were updated by 4.04%, therefore the figures recommended in the Independent Review for 2023/24 need to be adjusted to reflect that pay award – the NJC adjustments are shown in red in the table below:

Basic allowance £2,817, increased to £2,907

Chair's allowance £12,110, increased to £12,496

Vice Chair's allowance £2,833, increased to £2,923

Chairs of Committees allowance £2,817, increased to £2,907

Group Leaders allowance £2,253, increased to £2,325

Allowance	22/23 allowances	23/24 increases: • Independent Review • NJC 2022 Pay award	Total increased cost from 23/24
Basic	£2,220	+ £597 + £90	20 x £597 + £90 = £13,740
Chair	£9,543	+ £2,567 + £386	£2,567 + £386 = £2,953
Vice Chair	£2,220	+ £613 + £90	£613 + £90 = £703
Committee Chair	£2,220	+ £597 + £90	3 x £597 + £90 = £2,061
Political Group Leaders	£1,776	+ £477 + £72	4 x £477 + £72 = £2,196
Total additional cost		+ £4,851 + £728	+ £21,653

- 4.3 The increased Member allowances set out at paragraph 4.2 above will be subject to a further increase when the annual Green Book pay award for 1 April 2023 is announced by the NJC.

5. KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) Regulations 2003 No.1021 (2003 Regulations), provide that it is for each Local Authority (which includes Fire Authorities constituted by a combination scheme under the Fire Services Act 1947) to make such a scheme, which shall provide for the payment of a basic allowance, payable to all Members, and may include provision for the payment of special responsibility allowances and travelling and subsistence allowances for attendance at any Authority or committee meeting or any other duty approved by the Authority.
- 5.2 Fire Authorities are excluded from the provisions in the Regulations relating to the establishment of an Independent Remuneration Panel, however, before '*making or amending a scheme*', the authority shall '*have regard to*' the recommendations made by any remuneration panels in relation to any authority of which its Members are nominated (Regulation 19(2)).
- 5.3 Under Regulation 10(4) of the 2003 Regulations, 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 the index, then the scheme shall be deemed not to have been amended. In accordance with this Regulation, the Fire Authority makes automatic annual adjustments of Member allowances in accordance with the annual NJC Green Book pay award.
- 5.4 Under Regulation 10(5) the Authority must not rely on the index for automatic annual adjustments for longer than a period of four years before seeking a recommendation from an independent remuneration panel. Therefore, every four years, the Fire Authority must commission an external advisor to fully review the Members' Allowances Scheme, who will '*have regard to*' the recommendations made by the remuneration panels of the four unitary authorities. An independent review will next take place in the autumn of 2025 in readiness for the Scheme is issued for the financial year 2026-27.

6. RISKS

- 6.1 The Members' Allowances Scheme was independently reviewed alongside extensive bench marking with the unitary authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities. This has ensured that appropriate allowances are paid to Elected Members and has minimised the risk of challenge.

7. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The relevant statutes and regulations are set out in the body of this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- a) Independent Review of Members' Allowances Scheme – report 10 to Avon Fire Authority meeting 15 December 2021 and Appendix 1 Report of Bryony Houlden, Chief Executive of South West Councils dated November 2021.
- b) Members' Allowances Scheme 2022/23 – report 11 to Avon Fire Authority meeting 30 March 2022.

9. APPENDIX

- 1. Members' Allowances Scheme 2023-24

10. REPORT CONTACT

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