

ANNEX 1

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE
DATE: 6TH NOVEMBER 2024
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE
AUTHOR: ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME:
ANNUAL INCREASE TO BE APPLIED TO 2024-25
SCHEME; AND DRAFT 2025-26 SCHEME

Purpose of Report

1. To enable Members to consider the annual increase to the Members' Allowances Scheme 2024-25; and
2. To allow Members to consider the draft Members' Allowances Scheme for 2025-26

Recommended: That Members

- [1] Make a recommendation to the Fire Authority about the annual increase to be applied to the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2024-25; and
- [2] Make a recommendation to the Fire Authority about the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2025-26 (which covers the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026).

Background

The Law

3. The provisions governing Members' allowances are contained in the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The Regulations do not apply to the Fire Authority in full.

The 2024 Review

4. The outcome of the Review is covered earlier on the Agenda. Part of this report has been written upon the basis that the recommendations in the Independent Reviewer's report have been accepted. If this is not the case, then some amendments will be required.

Information

Members' Allowances Scheme 2024-25

5. The Members' Allowances Scheme 2024-25 states that:

The Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances in this scheme shall be increased by the same percentage increase as the NJC pay award for Local Government employees (Green Book).

The increases shall apply from the same date as the pay increases take effect and will be backdated, if necessary.

6. By agreeing the Scheme at the Fire Authority meeting held on 6th December 2023 Members agreed to uplift the Scheme in accordance with the pay award.
7. As has happened in the past few years the pay award, which has only recently been agreed, has been expressed as a fixed amount, rather than a percentage. The sum of £1,290 is to be applied to the NJC pay scale points 2 to 43, with 2.5% being applied to pay scale points above 43. The increase can be expressed as a range of percentages, e.g. pay scale point 2 is increased by 5.77% and pay scale point 43 by 2.5%.
8. In recent years the Authority has chosen to apply the average percentage increase to the Members' Allowances Scheme. It is assumed that this will be the case again for 2024-25.
9. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service does not use some of the pay scale points covered by the NJC pay award (because it pays no less than the Real Living Wage) and has some additional pay scale points (agreed locally). An average increase has been calculated by considering all of the pay scale points relevant to the Service; the average increase is 3.83%. If this was agreed, it would be applied to basic and special responsibility allowances.
10. The same percentage increase has previously and will continue to be applied to the allowances payable to the Independent (non-elected) member and the Independent Audit Committee member. This is now explicitly stated in the Scheme.
11. The pay award for operational staff (Grey Book) has also been taken into account in determining the annual increase in recent years. Members may recall that the Grey Book pay award was 4%, payable from 1st July 2024 (the Green Book pay award will be backdated to 1st April 2024). The 'requirement' to take the Grey Book pay award into account has been described further in the draft Members' Allowances Scheme 2025-26.

Draft Members' Allowances Scheme 2025-26

12. A draft of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2025-26 is attached to this report as Appendix 1. This has been drafted taking into account the recommendations and narrative from the Review (dealt with in the earlier Item) and incorporates an annual increase of 3.83% (applied to the 2024-25 Scheme). However, the draft Scheme for 2025-26 may need to be altered, e.g. if Members decide on a different annual uplift for 2024-25, or have alternative wording that they prefer to the appended draft.

Financial Implications

13. The annual increase for 2024-25 can be funded from the Authority's existing budget for Members' allowances. Any increase for 2025-26 should also be capable of being funded from the Authority's existing budget for Members' allowances.

Legal Implications

14. The legal position is summarised in the report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

15. There are no equality and diversity implications associated with this report.

Environmental Implications

16. There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE