

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF IRP MEMBER**

### **Structure of Scheme**

The IRP member noted that the Scheme appeared to be typical of others and appropriate for the activities carried out by Members.

**RECOMMENDATION: That no changes be made to the structure of the Members' Allowances Scheme.**

### **Indexation**

The members' allowances schemes of the constituent authorities included the following forms of indexation:

Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Halton use the NJC pay award rates for Local Government employees

Warrington use the Consumer Price Index (CPI)

**RECOMMENDATION: That the index to be applied annually should continue to be aligned to the NJC pay award for Local Government employees (Green Book) and take effect on the date prescribed by the NJC.**

### **Travel Allowance**

The IRP member queried why the Scheme had two mileage rates (NJC and the tax-free rate) and commented on the greater administrative burden using the NJC rates which were taxable.

**RECOMMENDATION: That the HM Revenue and Customs approved tax-free mileage rate (currently 45p) be used for all claims.**

### **Dependents' Carers' Allowance**

This allowance was introduced in 2013 as it was felt that a provision should be included in the scheme for a child care/carer allowance to ensure that the Authority scheme was in line with the local authorities in offering this allowance. The IRP member agreed that the allowance should be provided as it was an important factor in enabling Members to fulfil their duties as well as being able to care for dependents. She suggested that the Fire Authority should review the current allowance to ensure that Members incurring such costs were not out of pocket.

She recommended that consideration be given to paying actual costs to a maximum amount per annum.

The current scheme states that the Dependents' Carers' allowance will be paid up to a maximum per hour of £10.61 (subject to maximum payment of 15 hours per month) and in reimbursement of incurred expenditure against receipts. This would mean that a maximum of £159 per month (£1,909 per annum) could currently be claimed. It is suggested that the Authority covers the actual costs of care (subject to production of receipts) with a limit to the maximum that could be claimed per year. If this was revised upwards to £3,000 it should ensure that all reasonable claims could be covered.

**RECOMMENDATION: That the dependent carers' allowance be paid up to a maximum amount per annum in reimbursement of actual costs (subject to the production of receipts). As detailed above an increase in the maximum to £3,000 is proposed.**

## OBSERVATIONS OF THE IRP MEMBER

### **Basic Allowance**

The IRP member noted that the basic allowance was above average in comparison to both the Service's family audit group and other combined authorities. However, based on the evidence provided in respect of Members' roles and responsibilities and Members' attendance at formal committee meetings and other events, it was felt that this allowance was a fair level of remuneration in relation to the work undertaken.

### **Group Spokespersons**

The IRP member noted that there was no allowances paid for the role of Group Spokespersons in the majority of combined fire authorities and queried whether it was a role that was required. She commented that it may be something that the Authority would wish to look at further as part of a review of Members roles and responsibilities.

### **Member Champions**

The IRP member queried the number of Member Champions appointed and whether their roles had been reviewed to ensure that they remained effective. The Democratic Services Manager explained that a review of the roles of Member Champions to ensure that they still support the Authority's overarching purpose had been included as an objective in the Member Development Strategy for 2017-18.

### **Payment of One Special Responsibility Allowance**

The IRP member commented on the fact that Members could only receive one SRA (Special Responsibility Allowance). She suggested that where SRAs were being applied as 'the rate for the job' and a Member undertook two such positions of responsibility then it might be appropriate to pay two SRAs (assuming that both roles were being fulfilled competently). Members may wish to consider this once work was concluded reviewing roles and responsibilities.

### **Constituent Authorities Independent Remuneration Panels**

It was noted that there are no recommendations from the panels that directly impact upon the Fire Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme. The only matter which has been considered is in relation to the index to be applied.