

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

26 JUNE 2023

1. GOVERNANCE OF THE AUTHORITY 2023/24

Report of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1. THAT the calendar of meetings for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix A be approved.
- 1.2. THAT the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix B, be approved.
- 1.3. THAT Members' approve the commissioning of an independent remuneration panel to review the Members' Allowance Scheme in the 2023/24 Municipal Year to report back to a future Authority meeting.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1. This report is submitted for the Authority to determine its meeting schedule and allowance scheme for 2023/24.
- 2.2. This report also seeks member approval for the commissioning of an independent review of Members' Allowances in line with good governance principles.

3. BACKGROUND

Programme of Meetings

- 3.1. Following the disruption of COVID-19 in 2020/21 and 2021/22, Authority has returned to a full schedule of in-person public meetings in 2022/23, and it is intended that this continue, with only Policy Planning Forums, JCP and Pensions Board, which are not public meetings, continuing as virtual meetings. Members will be able to join all meetings remotely on medical grounds but will not

be able to vote or count towards meeting quoracy.

- 3.2. It is proposed that a further Full Authority meeting is added to the schedule in April 2024, which would bring the total for the municipal year to five. This is intended to address the current significant gap between the February meeting where Authority undertakes budget setting and the June AGM, which are fixed dates.
- 3.3. A proposed programme of meetings for 2023/24 is attached for approval in Appendix A.

Members' Allowance Scheme

- 3.4. In accordance with Regulation 10 of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, the Authority is required to make and approve a scheme of the payments of members' allowances each year.
- 3.5. The member allowance scheme was last reviewed by an Independent Review Panel and a report presented to the Authority in November 2018. However, the Authority agreed to maintain its current members' allowance scheme for 2019/20 through 2022/23. This scheme continues for 2023/24. It is proposed that a further review be undertaken given the passage of time since the last review (see 3.7).
- 3.6. The members' allowances scheme is attached for approval as Appendix B.

Independent Review of Member Allowances

- 3.7. Good governance principles dictate that the Authority should keep its governance processes, policies, and documents under regular review to ensure they remain fit for purpose. This includes its Member Allowance Scheme.
- 3.8. Members' Allowances were last reviewed in 2018/19, with an independent report provided to Authority by Andrew Campbell from the Local Government Association on 19 November 2018.
- 3.9. Several recommendations were made to increase member allowances and make changes to the allowance structure. Members took the decision not to accept the proposed changes, in

part because it was at that time expected that there would be a significant change to the governance structure in the near future. Therefore, allowances have remained substantively the same since 2011/12.

- 3.10. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the Regulations), require that any Authority proposing to change to a Scheme of Allowances "shall have regard to the recommendations made [...] by an independent remuneration panel."
- 3.11. It is proposed that the Authority commission a new independent remuneration panel to ensure that the current scale and distribution of allowances and other expenses remain proportionate and fair.

Constitutional Review

- 3.12. Please note that proposed changes to the Constitution of the Authority are covered in a separate paper.

4. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 In preparing this report, an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report invites the Authority to determine its decision making and governance arrangements for the coming year taking into account the relevant provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, Local Government Act 1985 and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Provision is made in the Authority's budget to meet costs associated with the operation of the Authority's decision-making structures and the payment of Members' Allowances.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no environmental impacts arising from this report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[The Local Authorities \(Members' Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2003](#)

[Member Allowances – Authority Paper, 19 November 2018.](#)

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