

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

23RD APRIL 2007

1. **MEMBER ATTENDANCE AT CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND VISITS**

Report of the Clerk.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) THAT the new arrangements for authorising attendance at conferences, seminars and visits be approved;
- (2) THAT the events for 2007/08 set out in the attached appendix be approved for the purpose of the payment of travel and subsistence allowances and conference fees (where appropriate), subject to the necessary budgetary provision being available.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To outline future arrangements for authorising attendance at conferences, seminars and visits.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The schedule of Approved Duties within the Members' Allowances Scheme allows for '*attendance as an appointed representative of the Authority, or of a Committee or Sub-Committee, at a conference, seminar or authorised meeting or visit at any other meeting authorised by the Authority.*' In the past reports have been submitted to the Executive Committee to obtain specific authority for members to attend individual events. At the Authority meeting on 12th February 2007, members suggested that this process was time consuming and unnecessary.
- 3.2 To streamline the process it is proposed that in future, a schedule of conferences, seminars and visits for the forthcoming year be submitted annually to the Authority for approval (See Appendix). It is proposed that approval be given in principle for attendance by nominated members at three conferences per year (but see 3.3 below), and to make provision also for the approval of attendance by members at other ad hoc events, subject to the necessary budgetary provision being available. For the purposes of an audit trail it is proposed that the Clerk would authorise attendance at each individual event.

- 3.3 Notification has been received that the Local Government Association Annual Conference and Exhibition 'People and Places' is being held at the ICC in Birmingham from 3rd to 5th July 2007. The conference will focus on the practical ways in which local government can improve people's lives, and will feature a number of high profile speakers. As this is a local venue and a good opportunity to raise the profile of the Authority, it is suggested that attendance at this conference in 2007/08 by the Chair and Vice Chair and one other member (or their nominees) be approved, in addition to the three conferences normally attended.
- 3.4 Approval has previously been given for members to undertake one fire station visit per quarter. Following representations from members, it is proposed to increase this to up to two visits per quarter. As previously agreed, members will be required to submit monitoring information to the Authority's Public Relations Office following each visit.
- 3.5 The Members' Allowance Scheme is due for review in 2007 and appropriate adjustments can be made to the scheme of approved duties to reduce to a minimum the need to take reports to the Executive Committee or the Authority.

4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has therefore not been carried out. The matters contained in this report do not relate to a policy change.

5. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 the Authority is required to make and publish a scheme setting out provisions for the payment of allowances to Members of the Authority.
- 5.2 Regulation 8 of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 states that such a scheme may provide for the payment of allowances in respect of travelling and subsistence undertaken in connection with or relating to such duties specified within the scheme (the scheme of approved duties).

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Provision is included in the Authority's budget for costs associated with attendance at conferences and seminars and for members' travel and subsistence costs.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Members' Allowances Scheme.

Minutes of the Authority and the Executive Committee.

LGA Alert 26/07.

Appendix

Events proposed for approval by the Authority for 2007/2008 for the purpose of the payment of travel and subsistence allowances and conference fees (where appropriate), subject to the necessary budgetary provision being available.

Event	Attendance By	Financial Implications
LGA Annual Fire Conference*	Chair and Vice-Chair (or their nominees)	Conference fees and travel and subsistence
Annual Fire Conference*	Chair and Vice-Chair (or their nominees)	Conference fees and travel and subsistence
Annual Assembly of Standards Committees*	Chair of the Standards Committee (or his/her nominee)	Conference fees and travel and subsistence
*It is proposed that attendance at three conferences per year be approved. In previous years these have included the conferences shown above.		
LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition (3 rd to 5 th July 2007, ICC, Birmingham)	Chair and Vice-Chair and one other member (or their nominees)	Conference fees and travel and subsistence
Fire Service Briefing Meetings arranged by the Dept for Communities and Local Government	Chair and Vice-Chair (or their nominee) OR all members of the Authority (as appropriate)	Travel and subsistence
Annual Visits to the Houses of Parliament to meet West Midlands MPs and members	All Members	Travel and subsistence
Member training events/seminars organised by the Authority or approved by the Chair and Vice-Chair	All Members	Travel and subsistence
Monitoring visits to fire stations (up to two per quarter)	All Members	Travel and subsistence