

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2006**

**1. AMENDMENT TO MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME**

Report of the Clerk and the Treasurer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT, subject to the approval of the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel, the Members' Allowances Scheme be amended to enable Members to claim dependents' carers' allowance in respect of expenses incurred in relation to approved duties.

**2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 2.1 This report is submitted to seek authority to amend the Members' Allowances Scheme in order to allow Members to claim dependents' carers' allowance in respect of expenses incurred for the care of their children or dependents whilst undertaking approved duties.
- 2.2 The report also re-affirms the position with regard to Lead Members and Deputy Lead Members claiming travel and subsistence allowances.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The current Members' Allowances Scheme, approved by the Executive Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2004, does not provide for members to be reimbursed for costs incurred in relation to childcare expenses. It is recommended that the scheme be amended to make provision to allow members to make such claims when undertaking approved duties.

- 3.2 It is proposed that the amount of dependents' carers' allowances payable in respect of approved duties be limited to an annual maximum amount of 10% of the Elected Member's basic allowance. Members would be required to submit valid receipts with their claim forms for any expenses incurred.
- 3.3 Whilst Lead Members and Deputy Lead Members are permitted within the scheme to claim travelling and subsistence allowances for attendance in respect of approved duties, meetings attended with officers in relation to their portfolio areas (e.g. Task and Finish Groups), are not currently regarded as approved duties.
- 3.4 The final report of the Independent Remuneration Panel of October 2004 makes reference to this and the increased involvement that Lead Members and Deputy Lead Members have in comparison to the former Committee Chair roles. The report also acknowledged that these members would have to attend additional meetings and briefings (e.g. Task and Finish Groups) and the Panel therefore proposed an increase in the Special Responsibility allowance paid to Lead Members and Deputy Lead Members in recognition of this additional commitment. The scheme was approved by the Executive Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2004.
- 3.5 In accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, the current scheme will be subject to review in 2007 by an Independent Remuneration Panel and a new scheme will be implemented with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008.

#### 4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1 In preparing this report, an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out, as the matters contained in this report will not lead to and do not relate to a policy change.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Members' allowances schemes are regulated by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.
- 5.2 Regulation 19 of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 requires that, before an authority makes or amends a scheme, it must have regard to the recommendations made to it by an independent remuneration panel. The Clerk will inform the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel in writing of the proposed amendment the scheme. If any objections are received from members of the panel a further report will be submitted.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There would be an increase in expenditure resulting from Members being able to claim dependents' carers' allowance, the scale of which would vary depending upon eligible expenses incurred. An increase in the Members' budget provision could be made as part of the Authority's budget process to accommodate this.
- 6.2 The Local Government (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require that an authority must advertise any amendments made to its Members' Allowances Scheme. It is estimated that an appropriate advertisement will cost in the region of £1,500 to £2,000.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Members Allowances Scheme approved November 2004  
Minutes of the Authority 26<sup>th</sup> July 2004.

SUSAN PHELPS  
CLERK

LYNDA BATEMAN  
TREASURER