



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 14 February 2024

Report title: Members' Allowances

Lead Member: Councillor Simon Rouse, Chairman

Report sponsor: Graham Britten, Director of Legal and Governance

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Action: Decision

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Scheme for Members' Allowances for 2024/25 be approved.

Executive summary:

The proposed Scheme of Allowances 2024/25 is based on the principle agreed by the Authority in February 2023 that indexation with the preceding year's Grey Book pay award be maintained. **Appendix 1** includes additional information showing the effect of the indexation for illustrative purposes.

The Authority agreed at its meeting on 14 December 2011 that the index linking for the period 2012/13 to 2014/15 – for basic and special responsibility (and co-optee) allowances – be the pay award for the Authority's staff on National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authorities' Fire and Rescue Services, Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book) for the preceding year. The application of this index linking had been endorsed annually by the Authority since 2014/15 until 2021/22.

Although there had been a Grey Book 2% pay award effective from 1 July 2020, the Authority agreed in February 2021 to suspend the indexation for the year 2021/22, resulting in a 0% increase in Members' allowances. The indexation with the preceding year's Grey Book pay award, was re-established for 2022/23 by a decision of the Authority; and by a decision of the Authority at its meeting on 15 February 2023 when it resolved 'That a Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2023/24 be adopted, index linked to the 2022/23 'Grey Book' pay award.'

The 2022/23 Grey Book pay award (7%) was subsequently published on 6 March 2023; as unusually, simultaneously, was the 2023/24 Grey Book pay award (5%). The draft Scheme of Allowances for 2024/25 is attached at **Appendix 1** with the 2023/24 figures included for illustration of the 5% increase in line with the NJC employers' Grey Book pay award.

Paragraphs 20 and 21 of the Scheme of Allowances provide that:

“20. The scales for all allowances are maxima and there is no obligation on any Member to claim any or all of the allowances.

21. A Member shall give notice in writing to the Chief Finance Officer that he/she elects to forego any part of his/her entitlement to an allowance under the scheme.”

Financial implications: The current budget for Members’ Allowances (Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances) is £71k. With Members’ allowance assumptions index linked to Grey book pay award, the proposed budget provides for a 5% increase in April 2024, which would increase the budget for Members’ Allowances to £74k.

Costs will be incurred in publishing a notice that the Authority has made a Scheme of Members’ Allowances in a newspaper circulating in its area. The cost is estimated to be in the region of £800.

Risk management: The recommendation will have no adverse effect on the Authority’s business.

Legal implications:

The Authority is required to adopt a Scheme of Members’ Allowances before 1 April each year and, in so doing, have due regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panels (IRP) of the constituent authorities [links are included the background papers section below^{1 2}] when considering its own Scheme of Members’ Allowances and confirm that it has done so when it gives public notice of the Scheme of Allowances.

The making or amendment of the Members’ Scheme of Allowances is a function reserved to a meeting of the Authority. An amendment may be made by the Authority in year. Regulation 10(4) of Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 provides that “A scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index as may be specified by the authority and where the only change made to a scheme in any year is that effected by such annual adjustment in accordance with such index the scheme shall be deemed not to have been amended.”

Privacy and security implications: No issues arising from the recommendations.

¹ Milton Keynes City Council’s IRP met on 5 January 2024. Its recommendation was to uprate all allowances by 4.48 percent which is the median officer increase for 2023/24 as it has historically indexed to its employees’ pay awards from the preceding year. However there had been no single percentage pay settlement agreed for officers for 2023/24

² Buckinghamshire Council’s extant IRP recommendations from 9 January 2020 included annual indexation to officers’ annual pay award or by CPI, whichever is lower.

Duty to collaborate: The making of a scheme of allowances is the responsibility of each individual authority defined in the Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The methodology for doing so is prescribed exclusively by those regulations.

Health and safety implications: No issues arising from the recommendations.

Environmental implications: No issues arising from the recommendations.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications: The Authority’s Scheme of Members’ Allowances does not include any element for meeting costs incurred by a Member who has to arrange care in order to carry out their function as a Member of the Fire Authority.

The Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 exclude the Authority from including such a provision in its Scheme. However, with the exception of co-opted members, all Members are appointed by either Buckinghamshire Council or Milton Keynes City Council and are entitled to claim “dependent carers’ allowances” from their appointing authority. There are currently no co-opted members on the Authority.

Consultation and communication: A notice that the Authority has made a Scheme of Members Allowances will be published in a local newspaper and the updated Scheme of Members’ Allowances can also be inspected at Headquarters, during standard office hours. Copies of the Scheme may be purchased at a cost of £2.50 or downloaded for free at www.bucksfire.gov.uk

Background papers:

[NJC 1/23 - Pay award 2022](#)

[NJC 3/23 - Pay award 2023](#)

[Minutes](#) of the meeting of the Executive Committee (Wednesday 8 February 2023)

[Minutes](#) of the meeting of the Authority (Wednesday 15 February 2023)

[Buckinghamshire Council Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel 9 January 2020](#)

[MKCC Report to full Council 24 January 2024](#)

[Executive Committee Minutes \(9 February 2022\),](#)

[Fire Authority minutes \(16 February 2022\)](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Draft Scheme for Members’ Allowances 2024/25 (showing the 2023/24 figures and increases for illustrative purposes).	None