

Towards a Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority

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MEETING	Shadow Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority
DATE OF MEETING	23 June 2015
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Scheme of Members' Allowances
STATUS OF REPORT	For open publication
PURPOSE OF REPORT	To recommend the adoption of a scheme of members' allowances for the Authority during its shadow year.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Following consultation with members of the Independent Remuneration Panels of the constituent Councils this report sets out a range of options for inclusion in a scheme of members' allowances for the Shadow Authority until 1 April 2016. A separate report will address the content of a scheme of allowances for the new Authority from 1 April 2016, once member governance arrangements have been agreed.
RISK ASSESSMENT	None
COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	No separate impact assessment has been carried out in bringing forward this report.
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	Each of the options set out has budget implications. Any payment of allowances would utilise part of the transitional grant made available for the new Authority. Monitoring Officers and Finance Officers agree that the payment of allowances in this way is a lawful expense associated with the formation of the new Authority.
RECOMMENDATIONS	That members consider the views of Independent Remuneration Panel members and adopt a scheme of allowances for the shadow period until 1 April 2016.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	None
APPENDICES	1. Dorset Fire Authority Scheme of Member Allowances 2. Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority Scheme of Allowances
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	Jonathan Mair, Monitoring Officer

1. Background

1.1 Like principal local authorities a Combined Fire Authority is subject to the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and is required to make a scheme for the payment of allowances to its members. However, unlike the constituent Councils a Combined Fire Authority is not required to establish its own Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to make recommendations as to the scheme of allowances. Instead, a Combined Fire Authority must consult with the IRPs established by its constituent Councils.

1.2 In May 2015 I wrote to the five constituent Councils inviting them to seek the views of their Panel members on the questions set out below. As background to these questions I have provided IRP members with information about:

- the statutory functions of Fire and Rescue Authorities
- the factors driving the decision of the Dorset and the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authorities to combine
- the size of the Shadow Authority, including an explanation that additional members who are not members of either the Dorset or the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority have been appointed to the Shadow Authority
- the role of the Shadow Authority during its shadow year until 1 April 2016
- the on-going statutory service delivery roles of the two Combined Fire Authorities
- the extent of the tasks to be undertaken in the shadow year and the six main workstreams being undertaken to deliver the combination
- the existing schemes of allowances in the Dorset and the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authorities.

1.3 The information about the existing schemes of allowances identified key differences between the Dorset and the Wiltshire and Swindon schemes including that:

- in Dorset the basic allowance payable to all members of the Fire Authority is higher at £3,550 than the basic allowance of £2,600 per annum payable to Wiltshire and Swindon members

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- the £10,832 special responsibility allowance payable to the Chairman of the Wiltshire and Swindon Authority is higher than the £7,100 payable to the Chairman of the Dorset Authority
- at the time Dorset paid its members of the Joint Committee (previously the Combination Oversight Board) a special responsibility allowance of 0.5 x basic allowance ie £1,775 (since the supply of this information to IRP members the Wiltshire and Swindon Authority has introduced a similar allowance for its members of the Joint Committee).

2. Questions to the IRP Members

2.1 IRP members were invited to consider the following questions:

- i) do IRP members support a Shadow Authority basic allowance of £3,000 per annum (the mid point between the basic allowance payable by the Dorset and the Wiltshire and Swindon Authorities?)

Responses

Of the four IRP members who have responded three supported the payment of a basic allowance of £3,000 to each of the 30 members of the Shadow Authority. One IRP member instead responded that the basic allowance for the majority of members should be set at £1,500 but that a basic allowance of £3,000 should be paid to those members who are not also members of either the Dorset or the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authorities.

Options

Members are invited to consider whether a basic allowance should be paid and if so the amount. In the light of question 2 members are also invited to consider what allowance should be paid to Shadow Authority members who are not members of either the Dorset or the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authorities.

- ii) If IRP members did not agree that members should receive a separate basic allowance for their work on the Shadow Authority they were asked to consider the position of those members who are not members of either the Dorset or the Wiltshire and Swindon Authorities.

Responses

The view of IRP members was that these members should receive a basic allowance of £3,000 irrespective of whether other Shadow Authority members received a basic allowance. The IRP member who proposed a basic allowance of £1,500 for other members proposed an allowance of £3,000 for those members who are not members of either the Dorset or Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authorities as this was their only and single level of remuneration.

Options

Members are invited to consider whether a basic allowance should be payable to this group of members and in line with the IRP member views to consider recognising through an allowance the contribution made by these members even if no basic allowance is to be paid to those who are also members of the Dorset or Wiltshire and Swindon Authorities.

- iii) Do IRP members support the payment of a special responsibility allowance of 2 x basic allowance ie £6,000 to each of the two Chairmen during the shadow period.

Responses

Two of the IRP members supported the payment of a Chairman's SRA at 2 x basic allowance to each Chairman. One of these two IRP members felt in particular that robust and active political leadership would be necessary during the shadow period and so irrespective of whether any basic allowance was payable to other members he was firmly of the view that a SRA should be payable to the two Chairmen. The third IRP member recommended that in view of the shared Chairmanship arrangement they should each receive 3 x basic allowance during their six month term and for the remainder only basic allowance. This member later reflected that the two Chairmen should each be paid an allowance of £7,500 throughout the year. The fourth IRP member suggested a SRA factor of 1.5 x basic allowance so that each Chairman received £4,500 throughout the year.

Options

Again, members are invited to consider whether an allowance should be payable and which of the views expressed by IRP members is to be preferred.

- iv) In view of the additional commitment expected of Shadow Policy and Resources Committee members the IRP members were asked to consider a SRA of 1 x basic allowance payable to all members of the Shadow Executive.

Responses

Three of the IRP members supported a SRA of 1 x basic allowance. The fourth supported a SRA but at a reduced 0.5 x basic allowance ie £1,500.

Options

Again, members are invited to consider whether an allowance should be payable and if so whether it should be set at £3,000 or £1,500. Irrespective of

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the level of allowance this is an opportunity to ensure consistency for all members of the Committee working most closely on the combination, whether they are Dorset or Wiltshire members.

- v) IRP members were asked to agree that for the Shadow Authority the Dorset and the Wiltshire and Swindon travel and subsistence arrangements should be applied and that in addition provision should be made for the payment of a dependent carer's allowance, consistent with the Dorset scheme.

Responses

The proposed arrangements for the payment of travel, subsistence and dependent carer's allowances were supported by all IRP members.

Options

Members are invited to agree that travel and subsistence allowances should be paid consistent with the Dorset and the Wiltshire and Swindon schemes and that a dependent carer's allowance should be paid.

- 2.2 Usually within the constituent Councils members are presented with very clear cut recommendations from an IRP and it is usual for the IRP recommendations to be accepted without debate. The position set out in this report is a little different in that the Shadow Authority does not have its own IRP and is instead faced with a range of recommendations from members of different IRPs.
- 2.3 The consensus view on the question of basic allowance is that an allowance of £3,000 should be payable to all members. In coming to a view on this members will though no doubt recognise the significant cost of paying such an allowance to all 30 members and in addition to this the cost of paying any SRAs to the Chairmen and members of the Shadow Policy and Resources Committee.
- 2.4 If SRAs are to be paid then the usual rule will apply so that no member may receive more than one SRA.
- 2.4 Irrespective of whatever decision is reached by the Shadow Authority it is open to members to choose not to draw an allowance.

Jonathan Mair
Monitoring Officer
June 2015

