



AGENDA ITEM: 16

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

21st June 2010

Member Remuneration Scheme – Care Allowance and Independent Members

Report by Colin Everett, Clerk to the Authority

Purpose of Report

- 1 To consider an appropriate amount of Care Allowance to be paid to eligible members and consider a request from the Standards Committee to pay an appropriate allowance to Independent Members.

Background

- 2 At its meetings on 16th March and 15th June 2009 the Authority considered the Wales Remuneration Panel's recommendations and their application to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.
- 3 The Authority considered and approved a revised Scheme of Remuneration except for the introduction of a Care Allowance where further exploratory work was required.
- 4 At its meeting on 15th June the Authority agreed to pay a Care Allowance but did not set an amount.
- 5 The Authority also agreed "not to pay an allowance" to its independent members due to the fact that Members

"felt that the work of the Standards Committee was minimal compared to the Standards Committees of constituent authorities. **Following a vote, it was agreed by majority not to introduce a co-optee's allowance.**"

Care Allowance

- 6 The Authority is advised to set the Care Allowance in line with the care allowance set by the Constituent Authorities (where one is set). The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales recommends that the level of Care Allowance payable in 2010/11 should be up to a maximum of £403 per month (with receipts provided for both informal and formal care arrangements).
- 7 The duties of a Fire Authority Member is less than would be undertaken in their role as a Member of a County Council so it is appropriate that the Care Allowance is reduced to reflect this. It is suggested that the care allowance be set in line with the remuneration received by the Chairman of the Fire Authority compared to the remuneration received by a Leader of a County Council, which would be 25% of the maximum allowance set by the Independent Remuneration Panel, up to a maximum of £100 per month.

Co-opted (Independent) Members

- 8 Three options for independent members were suggested at the meeting on 16th March 2009 as follows:

Option 1 – pay no allowance.

Option 2 – Provide an average allowance. Currently such members only receive travelling and subsistence allowances. The Panel has set maxima of £1,450 per annum for Chairs and £760 for other independent members. Such figures have been based on the assumption of four meetings per year multiplied by the current daily fee for Chairs and Members of Band 2 Assembly Government Sponsored Bodies, and in the case of the Chair, 2 additional meetings on "Chair duties".

In terms of application, given that on average the Authority's Standards Committee meets twice a year (half day meetings), excluding any training events, the level of allowances could be set at a quarter of the maximum amount i.e. £362.50 per annum for Chairs and £190 for other independent members.

Option 3 – an allowance could be payable based on a proportion of the total Fire Authority membership, for example 25% of the maximum allowance for a Fire Authority Member.

The Clerks to the three Fire Authorities in Wales have discussed these options and would recommend that a consistent approach across Wales is adopted and Option 2 would be desirable.”

Considerations

- 9 It should be noted that care allowance is not widely claimed across North Wales therefore it is likely that the financial impact will be low, maximum £1200 per annum.
- 10 At a meeting of the Standards Committee held on 4th May 2010, Members were advised that the Fire and Rescue Authority (at its 15th March 2010 meeting) had agreed to reconsider the remuneration proposal for independent members. Members of the Standards Committee acknowledged that it needed to be commensurate with the contribution of the individual to the committee. The committee is meeting more frequently with a fuller terms of reference (e.g. review of complaints policy) and there is a greater case for an allowance to be payable than previously.

Recommendation

- 11 That the Fire and Rescue Authority agrees to:
 - (i) pay a Care Allowance of up to £100 per month to eligible members with effect from 1st April 2009; and
 - (ii) consider the request from the Standards Committee positively to pay an appropriate allowance to Independent Members including the Chair with effect from 1st April 2010.