

Agenda item

Police and Crime Panel

Meeting to be held on 25th January 2016

MEMBERS EXPENSES AND ALLOWANCES

Contact for further information:

David Fairclough (01254) 585642 HR, Legal & Corporate Services,
david.fairclough@blackburn.gov.uk

Executive Summary

To review and clarify to Members allowances and expenses that can be claimed.

Recommendation

That members note the report

Background and Advice

1. The LGA document: "Panel arrangements and the balanced appointment objective" dated May 2012 says:

9 Allowances and Expenses

9.1 Each Authority has the discretion to pay its representatives on the Panel Special Responsibility Allowances, and to reimburse reasonable expenses incurred. No allowance or expenses payments will be made by the Panel itself to elected members.

Any allowances or expenses which may be made to elected members arising out of Panel Membership shall be determined and borne by the appointing Authorities for each Panel Member individually.

9.2 The Host Authority, on behalf of the Panel will reimburse reasonable expenses to co-optees provided that this is agreed as part of the annual budget approved by the Panel."

2. The matter was last considered at their meeting on 7th April 2014. In that report expenses is referred to as being travel, subsistence, loss of earnings and conference / training costs". Unfortunately the reference to "loss of earnings" has caused some confusion.

3. As members know in principle, Councillors are already compensated for loss of earnings by the Allowances system operated by each Constituent Council, so a claim cannot be made for “loss of earnings” as an expense item.

4. Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

4.1 Panel Members

Each Constituent Council sets the allowances for its members who sit on the Panel. As members will know recent Guidance has highlighted the scrutiny role of the Panel and as a result the Panel has set out its forward plan for the year ahead and identify areas it would wish to scrutinise in more detail. This will mean more meetings of the Panel and its sub-groups than originally envisaged. Members may wish to draw this to the attention of their Constituent Councils when review allowances for panel members.

4.2 Chairman

In terms of SRAs for Chairs of Panels, it is down to the relevant authority to consider paying an SRA if their Member has been appointed as Chair of the Panel. A number of authorities do provide the Panel Chair with a SRA equivalent to their Chairs of Scrutiny Committees.

5. Consultations

N/A

6. Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Legal Implications

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 provides that the Secretary of State may provide financial and other resources to Members of the Police and Crime Panels in connection with the exercise of their functions. Paragraph 1 above sets out the extract from Guidance that relates to the matter.

Financial Implications

As previously reported on 7th April 2014 a letter circulated to all Leaders of Constituent Councils from the Home Office dated 23 January 2012 stated that there would be £53,000 for support and training costs. In addition, up to £920 will be made available per member of the panel (including additional co-optees) for actual incurred expenditure to fund

expenses. There is no requirement to pay allowances to co-opted members and it is left to authorities to decide if they should be paid.

Risk management

The provision of effective scrutiny by the Police and Crime Panel is in accordance with the provisions of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The scrutiny role is increasing and the impact upon Panel Members should be reflected in the allowances made to Panel members.

7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

None