

SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES

MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

1. This Scheme is made on the 1st day of April, 2005, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) England Regulations 2003 for the payment of Members Allowances
2. This Scheme revokes the previous Scheme made by the Authority with effect from the 1st day of April, 2005. This Scheme shall continue until subsequently varied or revoked by the Authority.
3. **Basic Allowance**
 3. 1. The Authority shall pay a Basic Allowance to each Member of the Authority who is a Councillor for each year.
 3. 2. Subject to paragraphs 3.3, 7,8, and 12 the Basic Allowance payable in respect of each year commencing on 1st April, 2007, shall be £7,595.
 3. 3. Where the term of office of a Member begins or ends otherwise than at the beginning or end of a year, his/her entitlement shall be to payment of such part of the Basic Allowance as bears to the whole the same proportion as the number of days during which his/her term of office as a Member and Councillor subsists bears to the number of days in that year.
4. **Special Responsibility Allowance**
 4. 1. Subject to paragraphs 4.2 ,7,8, and 12 the Authority shall pay to a Member of the Authority who is a Councillor and who has the Special Responsibility specified in column one of Schedule 1 to this scheme a Special Responsibility Allowance in respect of each year commencing on the 1st April, 2005 of a sum specified in the corresponding part of column 2 of Schedule1.
 4. 2. Where a Member does not have throughout a year a Special Responsibility, his/her entitlement shall be to payment of such part of the respective Special Responsibility Allowance as bears to the whole the same proportion as the number of days in the period during which he/she has such Special Responsibility bears to the number of days in that year.

5. Travelling and Subsistence Allowance

5. 1. Subject to paragraphs 8, 9, and 12 the Authority shall pay to each Member of the Authority who is a Councillor an allowance in respect of travelling and subsistence undertaken in connection with or relating to the duties specified in paragraph 5. 2. in respect of the matters specified in column 1 of the Second Schedule at the rates specified in the corresponding part of column 2 of the second Schedule.
5. 2. The duties referred to in paragraph 5.1. (for which travelling and subsistence allowance is payable) are:-
- (a) The attendance at a meeting of the Authority or of any sub – committee of the Authority, or of any other body to which the Authority makes appointments or nominations, or of any committee or sub-committee of such a body;
 - (b) The attendance at any other meeting, the holding of which is authorised by the Authority, or a committee or sub-committee of the Authority or a joint committee of the Authority and one or more Local Authority within the meaning of section 270 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, or a sub-committee of such a joint committee provided that:-
 - (i) Where the Authority is divided into two or more political groups it is a meeting to which members of at least two such groups have been invited, or
 - (ii) if the Authority is not so divided, it is a meeting to which at least two members of the Authority have been invited.
 - (c) The attendance at a meeting of any association of authorities of which the Authority is a member.
 - (d) The attendance at any conference or meeting approved by the Authority (or the Clerk, acting under delegated powers on behalf of the Authority).whether inside or outside of the United Kingdom for the purpose of discussing any matter which relates to the interests or the functions of the Authority or to any function of Local Authorities in which the Authority has any interest.

- (e) The attendance at seminars and presentations arranged by the Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk, or the Authority which relate to the interests or the functions of the Authority or to any function of local authorities in which the Authority has an interest.
- (f) Making official and courtesy visits, whether inside or outside the United Kingdom on behalf of the Authority as approved by the Authority, or a Committee of the Authority (or the Clerk acting under delegated powers on behalf of the Authority.)

6. Co-optee's Allowances

- 6. 1. The Authority shall pay a Co-optee's Allowance in respect of attendance at conferences and meetings, to each person who is not a member of the Authority but who is a member of a Committee (or sub-committee) of the Authority (for example the independent member(s) appointed to the Authority's Standards Committee.)
- 6. 2. Subject to paragraphs 6.3., 7, 8, 9, and 12 the Co-optee's Allowance payable in respect of each year commencing on 1st April, 2007 shall be £585.
- 6. 3. Where the appointment of a member specified in paragraph 6.1. begins or ends otherwise than at the beginning or end of the year, their entitlement shall be to payment of such part of the Co-optee's Allowance as bears to the whole the same proportion as the number of days during which their term of office as a member subsists bears to the number of days in that year.

Suspension of Allowances

- 7. Where a member of the Authority (or of a Committee of the Authority as the case may be) is suspended from their responsibilities or duties as a member of the Authority in accordance with part III of the Local Government Act 2000 or regulations made under that part, then the Authority may withhold;
 - (a) the part of the Basic Allowance payable to that Member in respect of the period for which they are suspended or partially suspended, and/or
 - (b) the part of the Special Responsibility Allowance payable to that Member in respect of the responsibilities or duties from which they are suspended or partially suspended and/or
 - (c) any Travelling and Subsistence Allowance payable to the Member in respect of the responsibilities or duties from which they are suspended or partially suspended and/or

- (d) any Co-optee's Allowance payable to that Member in respect of the responsibilities or duties from which they are suspended or partially suspended.

Repayment of Allowances

- 8. Where payment of any allowance has already been made in respect of any period during which the Member concerned is:-
 - (a) suspended or partially suspended from their responsibilities or duties as a member of the Authority in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 or regulations made under that part; or
 - (b) Ceases to be a member of the Authority, or
 - (c) is in any other way not entitled to receive the allowance in respect of that period,

The Authority may require that such part of the allowance as relates to any such period be repaid to the Authority.

9. No Duplication of Payment

Where a Member of the Authority is also a Member of another authority, that Member may not receive allowances from more than one authority in respect of the same duty.

10. Elections to Forgo Allowances

A person may, by notice in writing given to the Clerk to the Authority elect to forgo their entitlement or any part of their entitlement to allowances.

11. Claims and Payments

- 11.1 Claims for Travelling and Subsistence Allowances, and Co-optee's Allowances must be made by the person to whom they are payable within 6 months of the date from which entitlement to such allowances arises.
- 11.2 Nothing in paragraph 11.1 shall prevent the Authority from making a payment where the allowance is not claimed within the period specified in paragraph 11.1.

12. Annual Adjustment of Allowances

The allowances specified in paragraphs 3 (Basic Allowance) 4 (Special Responsibility Allowance) 5 (Travelling and Subsistence Allowance) and 6 (Co-optee's Allowance) shall be increased annually with effect from the 1st day of April in each year by the same proportion as the increase in salary of firefighting staff in the Service in the year prior to 1st April of the year for which an allowance under this scheme is payable

13. Date from which Amendments to the Scheme are to apply

Where an amendment is to be made to this scheme by the Authority which affects an allowance payable for the year in which the amendment is made, entitlement to such allowance as amended shall apply with effect from 1st April prior to the date of amendment, (except in the case of payments for duties already performed) and unless otherwise determined by the Authority.

SCHEDULE 1

Special Responsibility Allowances

<u>Column 1</u>	<u>Column 2</u>
(Special Responsibility)	(Amount of Special Responsibility Allowance)
• Chairman	£15,186
• Vice Chairman	£11,391
• Opposition Spokesperson (Liberal Democrats)	£ 7,596
• Opposition Spokesperson (Conservative)	£ 7,596
• Chair of Community Safety Committee	£ 3,795
• Chair of Policy & Finance Committee	£ 3,795
• Chair of 08 Committee	£ 3,795
• Chair of Performance and Audit Committee	£ 3,795
• Chair of Consultation and Negotiation Panel	£ 3,795
• Member of North West Fire Board	£ 1,245
• Vice Chair of North West Board	£ 711
• Member of Safer Merseyside Partnership	£ 849
• Co-optees Allowance	£ 585

SCHEDULE 2

Travelling & Subsistence Allowances

1.	<u>Column 1</u>	<u>Column 2</u>
	<u>Travel Allowance</u>	(rates of allowance)
	Travel by public transport	A sum equal to the costs of the ordinary fare, or in the case of travel by rail the cost of first class travel
	Travel by motor cycle	21.3p per mile
	Travel by motor vehicle	53.1p per mile
	Travel by taxi	A sum equal to the actual fare and any reasonable gratuity paid
	Travel by air	A sum equal to the cost of the ordinary fare, or where travelling on a flight scheduled to take at least 5 hours a sum equal to the cost of club class
2.	<u>Subsistence Allowance</u>	
	<u>Column 1</u>	<u>Column 2</u>
	(absence period)	(Rates of Allowance)
2. 1.	Where the Authority does not pay for overnight accommodation direct and:-	
	• Absence overnight in U.K. from usual place of residence (other than in London)	£139
	• Absence overnight from usual place of residence in London (i.e. the city of London, Boroughs of London, Greenwich, and Fulham, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwall, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster)	£170
	• Absence overnight outside the U.K.	£170
2. 2.	Subject to paragraph 2.3. where the Authority pays for overnight accommodation direct and there is absence from the usual place of residence, a subsistence allowance of £53.50 in London and £42.15 elsewhere, is payable. Where the absence does not involve an absence overnight:-	

Breakfast Allowance

- (a) Absence of more than 4 hours before 11 a.m. £ 8.49

Lunch Allowance

- (b) Absence of more than 4 hours, including the period 12 noon and 2 p.m. £ 12.75

Tea Allowance

- (c) Absence of more than 4 hours including 3pm to 6pm, or £ 5.31

Evening meal Allowance

- (d) Absence of more than 4 hours ending after 7 p.m. £ 15.93

2. 3. Where meal(s) are provided free of charge to the member their entitlement to an allowance will not apply in respect of the meal period for which such meal or meals are provided without charge to the member.

MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
SUCCESSION PLANNING POLICY
CHAIRMAN & VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE AUTHORITY

MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

SUCCESSION PLANNING POLICY

CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE AUTHORITY

1. Policy

The Authority recognises that it must plan for succession for positions of:-

- (a) Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority, and
- (b) Independent Members appointed to the Standards Committee.

2. Implementation

- 2.1. At each annual meeting of the Authority, the Clerk shall request an indication from all Members as to whether there are any Members who would wish to put themselves forward for consideration as either a future Chair or Vice Chair.
- 2.2. If there are Members who are prepared to undertake either of these roles, then arrangements will be made to enable prospective Chairs and Vice Chairs to shadow the existing Chair and Vice Chair over a period of time.
- 2.3. The Clerk shall arrange for an external selection process for selection and appointment of Independent Members, which will be completed in ample time to enable newly appointed independent Members to take up their appointments of independent Members.
- 2.4. The Clerk shall seek to retain a list of external candidates, who may be willing to take up an appointment as an Independent Member in the event that any serving Independent Members suddenly become unable to continue as an Independent Members suddenly become unable to continue as an Independent Member for any reason.

MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER & STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND CIVIL DEFENCE AUTHORITY

PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER AND STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

1. Role and Purpose of Protocols
 1. 1. These protocols contain guidance to Members of the Authority (called "Members") and Members of staff (called "Officers" in these protocols on the understanding that it includes all Authority employees) about working together.
 1. 2. There are Codes of Conduct for Members and Officers. A breach of the protocols will probably be a breach of one or other Code, but may not be.
 1. 3. A breach of the protocols by a Member should be reported to the Monitoring Officer (the Director of Law & Clerk). If the monitoring Officer receives a written complaint of a breach of the protocols which also appears to be a breach of the Code, he or she will refer it to the national Standards Board. Alternatively, a Member may send a complaint about another Member direct to the Standards Board, but should copy it to the Monitoring Officer. If the Monitoring Officer receives a complaint about a breach of the protocols which does not seem to be a breach of the Code of Conduct, he or she may refer it to the Authority's Standards Committee.
 1. 4. Any investigation into the conduct of any member carried out by an officer must be conducted in accordance with the relevant legal rules, and the principles of natural justice, and have regard to any national guidance and the member's rights under the Human Rights Act. The nature of the complaint should be communicated to the member at the start of the process and the initial investigation should be carried out within three months.
 1. 5. A breach of protocols by an Officer should be reported to the Officer's line manager. A breach by the Chief Fire Officer should be reported to the Monitoring Officer (if it involves illegality), or the Chief Finance Officer (if it involves financial irregularity), or reported to the appropriate external regulatory body such as the District Auditor.

2. Officers' Political Neutrality

2. 1. All Officers must be politically neutral. Officers acting in their official role should not seek to interfere in the making and implementation of Authority policy. They should avoid the appearance of political bias by word or deed when acting in their official capacity. They cannot be appointed on political grounds. They can be aware of Members' political objectives, but they must not have political objectives themselves. Some mainly senior, Officers have politically restricted posts, affecting the political activities that they can undertake outside work. Although some local authorities have Officers called 'Political Assistants', who need not be politically neutral but are covered by special legal rules, the Authority does not.
2. 2. Officers should give accurate professional and factual advice to Members. They should not hide awkward issues. Members should not try to influence them to do otherwise.
2. 3. Officers must follow every lawfully expressed policy of the Authority, whatever their personal opinions, at the earliest opportunity. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action. Where delays occur, they should be reported appropriately.
2. 4. Members all have different roles, such as administration and opposition. Officers should take this into account. Officers owe a duty to the whole Authority, to help it to discharge its functions effectively, efficiently and economically and in accordance with the law. Most of their work will be commissioned by the political administration. On the other hand, effective opposition is an aspect of good governance. Officers must recognise and support this, but opposition cannot ask them to impede the policies or instructions of the Authority, or require them to reallocate resources from Authority priorities.
2. 5. Members are entitled to take into account the political implications of their decisions. So long as their true purpose is the due discharge of Authority functions, they can have a secondary objective of obtaining electoral advantage. Officers may be aware of this, but should not be swayed by it. They will hear political discussions, but should not generate or be influenced by them.
2. 6. Members work individually or collectively. They work collectively, in full Authority meetings, in Committees, Sub-Committees, Panels and Working Groups. They also work collectively as political Groups. Officers may be invited to offer advice and information to political Groups, but this must be limited to Authority business, not party or group business. Similar facilities should be offered to all political Groups.

Officers must take special care, though, if party members are present who are not Councillors and therefore not covered by a Code of Conduct. Group Members should tell Authority Officers when this is the case, and in these circumstances, Officers may wish for example to withhold confidential information. Officers must also respect the confidentiality of Group discussions.

2. 7. Decisions are taken by the full Authority or by Committees or Sub-Committees, or are delegated to Officers, in accordance with the determination of the Authority at its annual meeting. Individual Members cannot take decisions but can be expected to be consulted in certain cases before an officer makes a decision under delegated powers. Officers who take decisions under Delegated Powers must ensure that they are recorded.
2. 8. The Chair, Vice Chairman, Committee Chairs and Opposition Spokesperson have a special role. Officers will inevitably work more closely with them than with other Members. They will meet more frequently, and they will be briefed accordingly. Members' access to information will be guided by the principles set out in Section 5.

3. Members' and Officers Roles

3. 1. Members and Officers are public servants, but have different roles. Members serve during their term of office and are answerable to the electorate. Officers are employed by the Authority and responsible to it. Their job is to give advice to Members and other officers and to work under the direction and control of the Authority.
3. 2. The roles of certain members and officers can be summarised as follows:-

Chairman - Chairs the Authority. Responsible for promoting and developing the Authority.

Vice Chairman - Deputises for the Chairman in his or her absence.

Committee Chairs - Chair and co-ordinate Committee meetings. Work together to ensure effective scrutiny. Validate urgency process in executive decisions.

Chair of Standards Committee - Chair the committee and co-ordinate its work.

Deputy Chairs - Deputise for Chairs in their absence and assist in co-ordination.

Opposition Spokesperson - Leads main opposition group and represents it at meetings of the Authority and its Committees.

Minority Party Group Leaders - Lead other opposition Groups and represent them at meetings of the Authority and its Committees and generally.

Group Whips - Responsible for organisation and administration within Groups and for liaison with Officers about Members' attendance at meetings and representation on outside bodies.

Members as :-

- Members of Authority and Committees - take part in the decisions and activities of full Authority meetings and of committees
- Community representatives - represent the views of their constituents to the Authority.
- Authority representatives - represent the City Council on a variety of outside bodies and to their local communities.

Chief Fire Officer - Overall responsibility for corporate management and operation and advice. Co-ordinates discharge of functions and staffing requirements.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer - Deputises for Chief Fire Officer in his absence.

Assistant Chief Fire Officers and Directors - responsible for operations and advice within their portfolios.

Chief Finance Officer - the Executive Director of Resources has responsibility for the lawfulness and financial prudence of decision-making and the administration of financial affairs.

Monitoring Officer - Director of Law & Clerk ensures the lawfulness and fairness of decision-making, and acts with the Standards Committee and external regulators to promote adherence to the Members Code of Conduct.

3. 3. These and a number of other officers have specific statutory responsibilities from the nature of their appointment or from specific designation (e.g. Fire Safety Inspectors)

4. Support Services for Members

4. 1. The Authority provides support services for Members:-
 - Group officers, including administrative officers and facilities;
 - ICT facilities;
 - Development and training;
 - The Members' research facility in Strategy & Member Development Department
 - Allowances and expenses;
 - Official transport.
4. 2. There are three constraints on the use of these facilities: legal limits, cost factors, and the importance of providing equivalent facilities to all political groups.
4. 3. Members must not abuse these facilities. This protocol sets out the general principles.
4. 4. None of the rules affect the activities of Members using other resources, for example using support provided by their political parties. Political lobbying and campaigning is an essential part of the government at all levels. The different level of resources available to the different political parties and groups is not a matter for the Authority.
4. 5. Authority resources must never be used for party political publicity. "Publicity" has a very wide legal definition - any communication to any section of the public is covered.
4. 6. Leaving aside publicity, the Code of Conducts says " a Member.....must when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the Authority.....ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the Authority or of the office to which the Member has been elected or appointed."
4. 7. Resources are limited, so explicit limits are placed on copying, posting etc. These can be waived in exceptional circumstances by the Director Strategy & Member Development or Member Liaison Officer, or the Clerk, but the situation must be truly exceptional. Members should not divide up work into parcels, or trade entitlements, to find ways around the limits.
4. 8. Members using IT facilities must abide by the Authority's e-mail and intranet code. A copy of the policy is included in the document entitled Members Policy & Guidance Documents.

4. 9. Members must not use any facilities for their own private purposes, unless they are just using spare capacity at no cost to the Authority and in accordance with any instructions given by the Authority.
- 4.10. Official cars and taxis are made available to Members and Officers solely for use on official duties. Guidance is included in the document entitled Member policy and tribunal documents.
- 4.11. Members' allowances, and subsistence and travel expenses, are paid in accordance with the Scheme and the legislation. Members may only claim expenses that they have actually incurred, and that they needed to incur for Authority activities. This should comply with the legal code.

5. Members' Access to Information

5. 1. Information requested by Members should be supplied to them unless there are good reasons for withholding it in accordance with this Protocol, and those reasons are given in writing and copied to the Monitoring Officer. Information requested should be supplied accurately and quickly. In a few instances, the need to meet legal constraints, and to protect the Authority's and the public interest, may lead to contention. The following paragraphs set out some guidance on how to resolve those issues.

They describe:-

- the circumstances in which members have a legal right to access the information
- the limits to those legal rights
- the process that will determine a dispute

5. 2. Under the "need to know" principle, Members are entitled to the information that they reasonably require to enable them to discharge their functions as Members. They are not entitled to go on fishing expeditions through Authority files. They are not entitled to access information for some other purposes, such as to help somebody to attack the Authority. Their rights will therefore depend on their individual roles, and on which Committee they serve on. Statute law give Members rights of access to certain Authority documents.

5. 3. Members do not have a general right to require Officers to carry out research or administrative work to provide information, apart from officers whose job is to provide such support to Members. Unless they have authority to do so by virtue of their specific role they cannot require resources to be re-allocated for work of this kind, however, all officers will assist wherever they can.
5. 4. Members are entitled to publicly accessible information, and personal information about themselves, like any other member of the public (for example under the Data Protection Act or in due course the Freedom of Information Act). Members may be authorised by a member of the public to access personal information on their behalf, but the authority must be clear and explicit.
5. 5. An Officer may require a Member to undertake that the information will be treated as confidential before supplying it, and may refuse to supply it if the undertaking is not given. Reasons for confidentiality should be given in writing and subject to the Right of Appeal to the Monitoring Officer.
5. 6. Information provided by Officers should be prompt and accurate.
5. 7. Any Member who is dissatisfied with the decision to withhold information should complain to the relevant Uniformed Principal Officer. If a Member is still dissatisfied, they should raise the matter with the Chief Fire Officer, who may take legal advice. If the Member disagrees with the decision of the Chief Fire Officer they can place the matter before the Authority, or the relevant Committee, or raise it with the District Auditor.

6. Confidentiality

6. 1. Members and Officers must keep confidential information and papers confidential. This means not sharing them with anyone.
6. 2. Authority and Committee papers marked "exempt" are "confidential" and are to be treated as confidential. Other information may be confidential because it is against the Authority's or the public interest to disclose it or because of the circumstances in which it was obtained.
6. 3. Information about someone's private or business affairs will normally be confidential, as will their correspondence with the Authority.

6. 4. Officers should make it clear to Members if they are providing them with confidential information. If a Member is uncertain about whether or not information might be confidential, he or she should seek guidance from the Monitoring Officer, and in the meantime treat it as confidential.
6. 5. If a Member receives confidential information but thinks that it should be released on a "whistle-blowing" basis in the public interest, he or she must check with the Chief Fire Officer, Monitoring Officer or Chief Finance Officer or the appropriate external Regulatory Authority before deciding to release it.

7. Personal Relationships

7. 1. The relationship between Members and Officers must be based on mutual respect and confidence.
7. 2. Close personal relationships between Officers and Members can arise, for example, where a Member's relative works for the Authority. This needs special care. The Member should declare the relationship to his or her Group Leader or Whip. The Officer should declare a relationship to his or her line manager, who should make it known to the Clerk and Monitoring Officer. These disclosures should be recorded in writing. They may be made on a completely confidential basis, that is to say on the very clear understanding that no one else will be told without both parties' consent. If there is a special reason why the Group Leader, Whip or Line Manager should not be told then the advice of the Monitoring Officer should be taken. The Officer and the Member must strive to avoid giving any impression of favouritism. The relationship may give the Member a declarable personal interest, and possibly a prejudicial interest preventing him or her from relevant Authority activity. The Officer may be unable to carry out certain activities that would otherwise be part of his or her job. Both need to bear these constraints in mind when they seek changes in their areas of responsibility. In an extreme case the relationship may make it impossible for them to perform those responsibilities properly.
7. 3. Officers and Members should likewise strive to avoid developing antagonistic or combative relationships with each other. They should show respect to one another at all times. Offensive behaviour by an Officer to a Member is likely to be a disciplinary offence. Offensive behaviour by a Member to an Officer is likely to be a breach of the Code of Conduct.

7. 4. A Member who is criticised by another Member can answer back. It would not be appropriate for an officer to do so. Members should avoid public criticism of individual Officers, as it is unfair and oppressive. Members should not attempt to pressurise individual Officers to give them preferential treatment, or to compromise their professional integrity.
7. 5. Officers' performance is monitored by their line managers and the performance of each service is monitored by the Authority.
7. 6. Complaints about the performance of individual Officers should be made to their line managers. Complaints about Uniformed Principal Officers or Directors should be made to the Chief Fire Officer. Complaints about the legality or financial probity of the activities of the Chief Fire Officer should be made to the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer. Otherwise complaints about the Chief Fire Officer should be placed before the Authority or taken to the appropriate external regulator such as the District Auditor.
7. 7. If a Member has a personal, private or business interest in a matter being dealt with by an Officer, he or she should strive to ensure that no suspicion of preferential treatment can arise. The objective should be as much transparency as possible, but subject to this it may be better for the Member to arrange for someone else to deal direct with the Officer. The Member should write to the relevant officers placing it on record that he or she does not expect preferential treatment. A Member should not badger or pressurise the Officer, or use ease of access to his or her personal advantage.

8. Officers, the Board and Committees

8. 1. Reports to the Authority, its Committees and Management Board are made by officers. Initially the reports will have been drafted by Officers, and they will bear the name of the reporting officer (usually the Chief Fire Officer, and a Contact Officer).
8. 2. The agenda for the Management Board is agreed by the Chief Fire Officer and the Chairman (or Vice Chairman). The agenda for a Committee is agreed by the Chair on the advice of the relevant Officers. If, exceptionally, an Officer needs to report to an Authority body outside these principles but in discharge of his or her professional or legal duty, the Officer must consult the Chief Fire Officer and the Chair of the body in question first.

9. Correspondence

9. 1. Only the Chairman (or Vice Chairman) can write official letters (that is to say a letter intended or appearing to be written on behalf of the Authority as a body, as opposed to on behalf of an individual member) although generally officers will handle correspondence of all kinds. Chairs of Committees may write letters concerning the conduct of their meetings, but not otherwise. Members writing official letters on behalf of the Authority must use a style which distinguishes this from the letters written in their personal or political capacities. Other Members' letters are written in personal or political capacities.
9. 2. A Member can ask an Officer to keep their correspondence private. If the Officer cannot do this (because they are under an obligation to someone else, or because the Authority ought to respond to the issue raised in a different way) they must make this clear straight away. Otherwise, the Officer must observe confidentiality.
9. 3. Unless correspondence is private, Officers may copy letters of general interest to the relevant Member or Committee Chair. They should always state that they are doing this on the letter itself. Officers should never copy Members' correspondence to other Members secretly.
9. 4. Officers should be aware that members may circulate their letters to the public unless requested not to do so.
9. 5. This all applies to e-mails.
9. 6. If an Officer needs to reproduce and communicate an oral conversation with a Member in written form, he or she will copy the correspondence to the Member concerned as a matter of courtesy.
9. 7. Officers should respond to correspondence from Members within 5 working days.

10. Staffing Matters

- 10.1. Members may be formally involved in staff recruitment, disciplinary and grievances issues as a member of a panel.
- 10.2. That apart, Members should not become personally involved in such matters.
- 10.3. Officers should not raise individual personal issues with members concerning their jobs.

- 10.4. If a member receives a "whistleblowing" disclosure from an employee he or she should pass it on in accordance with the whistleblowing code (Appendix 5). Members should contact the Clerk, Director of Strategy and Member Development or the Member Liaison and Support Manager should they require guidance.

11. Authority Property

- 11.1. Individual Members do not have a general right to visit Authority premises or land that are not open to the public. However, Members are encouraged to visit Fire Stations and other Fire Authority premises.
- 11.2. Members may have a "need to know" what is happening on Authority premises in the same way as they have access to other information. This will entitle them to visit premises for specific such as scrutiny.
- 11.3. If Members do visit premises, they should normally make themselves known to the person in charge.

12. Gifts or Hospitality

- 12.1. The code says that "a Member must within twenty-eight days of receiving any gift or hospitality over the value of £25, provide written notification to the Authority's Monitoring Officer of the existence and nature of that gift or hospitality".
- 12.2. This only relates to gifts or hospitality received in their capacity as Members. Notification may be given in writing or by e-mail to the Director Strategy & Member Development or Member Liaison Officer, who will keep a Register that any member may see. Members are free to estimate the value of the gift or hospitality but, if in doubt, should declare it.
- 12.3. Members should be aware that this will catch all hospitality over this figure.
- 12.4. Members may wish, and are encouraged, to register lower value gifts and hospitality, and those that have in fact been refused.
- 12.5. Members should not accept gifts or hospitality where this is contrary to guidance given by the Authority. Guidance is included in the document entitled Members Policy & Guidance Documents.
- 12.6. The Officer code contains equivalent requirements.

13. Attendance at Meetings

13.1. Members may wish Officers to attend public meetings to provide them with support. This is subject to the principles set out below:-

- Officers cannot become involved in political debate. This includes public meetings at which members are not present.
- Officers will be able to explain particular proposals and issues but technical officers are not expected to deal with issues outside their area of knowledge.
- Officers will not normally attend such meetings after the publication of notification of election.

13.2. Officers may be invited to public meetings by local people or Organisations. If so, they should consider whether any Members, should be notified.

MEMBERS TRANSPORT GUIDANCE

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEMBERS TRANSPORT GUIDANCE

Introduction

In order to attend meetings of the Authority, its Committees and other approved duties which are for the purpose of or in connection with the discharge of the functions of the Authority, the elected Members of the Authority are entitled to claim travelling allowances in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) England Regulations 2003 (as amended). The Members Allowance Scheme of the Authority provides for travel allowances payable at specified rates to any Councillor who carries out any approved duty as defined in the Scheme.

This document sets out the guidance of the Authority with regard to the various options available to elected Members for travelling to perform their duties. It also sets out the allowances that they are eligible to claim in respect of any travel expenses that they do incur.

Policy

Guiding Principles for Members Transport

Members are asked to attend meetings and other duties wherever possible by use of their own vehicles, public transport or where no public service is reasonably available, by taxi. Where a taxi is not available the use of a hired vehicle may be authorised by the Clerk to the Authority. It is accepted that such modes of transport represent the most convenient and best value options for both Members individually and the Authority in general.

The "last resort" option would be for Service vehicles, driven by Service personnel to transport Members to their duties. However this is clearly a costly and inefficient use of resources and it would also inevitably, on occasion, prove logistically impractical, particularly as Members are not permanently based at any particular Service premises. However there will be certain instances where transport of Members by Service vehicle is appropriate and this guidance indicates such circumstances and the procedure which should be followed in the event that a request for such use is contemplated.

Strategy & Member Development will provide a journey planning service to Members for all journeys outside the county area. Members are requested to advise the Unit of the date and location of the event they are attending as soon as they become aware of it. An assessment will then be made of the most efficient and effective mode of transport, given the specific circumstances of the journey and according to the balance between the criteria of time saved, the alternative available modes of public or private transport, the cost of such alternatives, the practicality, convenience and ease of travel for the individual and the implications for the Authority of otherwise providing transport directly.

In the event that the Authority directly meets the cost of providing transport, Members are not entitled to claim an expense.

In certain situations, as detailed below, Members are requested, where possible, to provide receipts or other evidence of expenditure for costs actually incurred in the course of travel.

Use of Members Own Vehicles

If Members on approved duties use their own private motor vehicle, they are entitled to claim back the following mileage allowances:

Members may claim the amount of actual expenditure for car parking and of tolls for tunnels or bridges. If absent overnight on an approved duty, reimbursement of the actual cost of garaging a motor vehicle may be made to Members.

All of the above claims can be made by completing the standard yellow claim form for allowances that are available from Strategy & Member Development. Receipts or other evidence of expenditure, if possible, are requested where claims are made for car parking or garaging fees. They will not be required for payment of Mersey Tunnel or other toll fees.

Use of Public Transport

Rail

Members, if they so wish, are entitled to use first class rail travel, where it is available or otherwise they may use second class, ordinary or any saver fare that is available.

Claims for reimbursement of transport within the county by way of the Merseyrail network should be made to Strategy & Member Development on the standard allowances claim form.

In respect of travel by rail outside the county, Strategy & Member Development will make arrangements in advance, specifying the time and date of travel and the nature of the tickets they require. It should be remembered that, in particular with rail travel, discounted and saver tickets are available when tickets are reserved sufficiently in advance. Alternatively, if appropriate, Members may meet the costs of travel themselves and reclaim the expenditure later, providing receipts or other evidence of expenditure wherever possible.

Bus, Ferry and other Public Transport

Members may claim first class travel where available or otherwise the actual amount of the ordinary fare or any saver fare where available. Claims should be made on the standard claims form.

Use of Taxis

The Clerk is delegated to determine if a specific journey by taxi is acceptable by undertaking an assessment of the balance between time saved, alternative available modes of public or private transport, the cost of such alternatives, the practicality, convenience and ease of travel for the individual and the implications for the Authority of otherwise providing transport directly.

After considering the above issues and having determined that there are clear circumstances - such as there being a case of urgency or where no public transport service is reasonably or directly available – where the use of a taxi is acceptable, the Clerk will authorise such use. Members should claim on the standard form the actual fare incurred and any reasonable gratuity paid. Receipts or other evidence of expenditure, where possible, should be provided.

Use of Hired Vehicle

Where there is an entitlement, as detailed above, to reclaim taxi fare and where such a vehicle is not available or where the likely cost of the fare is excessive, a Member is entitled to be repaid the cost of hiring a motor vehicle other than a taxi. However, if such an event is likely to occur, Members are requested in the first instance to contact Strategy & Member Development. They will ascertain first of all the possibility of a Service vehicle being provided or if not, they will arrange for the Service to make appropriate efforts to hire a suitable vehicle for the use of the Member. In the event that this is not possible and the Member hires the motor vehicle directly, they should provide appropriate receipts or other evidence of expenditure when submitting a claim for reimbursement.

Air Travel

Members are entitled to claim the railway fare between destinations or where travelling on a flight scheduled to take at least five hours, a sum equal to the cost of club class.

In most cases the Authority, via Strategy & Member Development, will directly meet the costs of air travel but in the event that Members do pay their own fare, they should provide receipts or other evidence of the fare, along with their claim for reimbursement.

Use of Transport provided by Service

Members will be assisted with directly provided transport for certain particular events. There are two broad categories for the provision of Service transport:-

- (i) where for a visit which will involve a number of Members, (for example a Members Awayday or a visit to the Fire Service College or Westminster) the Authority directly arranges transportation, usually in the form of a car, minibus or coach, in order to minimise overall transport costs; and
- (ii) where there is a direct request from a Member for the use of a Service vehicle and/or the provision of a Service driver.

In the latter category, the Member should initially make their request to Strategy & Member Development who will act on behalf of the Clerk in liaising with the Chief Fire Officer to ascertain if the request is feasible both in terms of the availability of a vehicle and/or driver and of the existence, in the specific circumstances, of any potentially more economic and practical alternatives such as the use of a taxi.

Members in possession of a full, valid driving licence, are insured to drive Service vehicles and are eligible to make a request to do so. In the event that Members are authorised to self-drive a Service vehicle and that it is necessary for them to purchase petrol, oil or any other necessary commodity or accessory which is essential to ensure they complete their journey, they may claim reimbursement of the actual costs incurred. Receipts or other evidence of expenditure should be produced wherever possible.

Travel Insurance

Members are requested to ensure that Strategy & Member Development are aware in advance of all occasions when they will be either travelling outside the UK or travelling by air as such trips will require specific notification to the insurers of the Authority.

Further Information

For further information or questions on any aspects of this policy, please contact Strategy & Member Development

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