

Report of the County Solicitor: Chief Officer for Legal, Human Resources and Communications.

Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to review the options for approving travel expenses for Local Government Association (LGA) appointments to Policy Boards, as outlined below.

Options

Option 1 - Amend the allowances scheme to include such policy board travel as an 'approved duty'. Whilst this would be very inclusive, it would be very difficult to keep a track on the expenses incurred and the significant impact this could have on the Members allowances budget. In times of restricted budgets, this may appear unpalatable and also unmanageable in terms of monitoring spend.

Option 2 – Adopt a similar approach to that of attendance at training events where Members seek approval before they accept the appointment as to whether the Council will pay for the travel expenses for the meetings of the Board. This would be via approval of the budget holder, the Head of Democratic Services, in liaison with the Leader of the Council. Members would be expected to make a case, outline the expected costs and frequency and also demonstrate the benefits to Devon County Council.

Option 3 – Members accept the appointment to the Board of their own volition, but are then responsible for all travel costs, to be met from their basic allowance or other personal income

1. Introduction

1.1 Members will be aware of the value that this Council places on training and development and the benefits brought. There are a number of mechanisms by which this happens, including in house training, approved conferences and previously via a shared service with a number of District Councils and Somerset County Council. It has become apparent of late that the LGA political groups makes a number of appointments to other boards and forums. Whilst it is important that Devon and other rural authorities are represented at some of these, to ensure they are not 'London centric' and also to provide development opportunities for Members, it is felt appropriate to apply some consistency in the application of approval of travel expenses to such events.

2. Background

2.1 The Council makes a number of appointments to outside bodies. Included in this schedule are a number of national bodies as well as regional and countywide organisations and also some appointments that are very local in nature such as charity's or educational foundations.

2.2 Within the national appointments (approved at Council every four years) some of these relate to the Local Government Association (LGA) including the General Assembly as well as more specific appointments, for example, the Coastal Issues Special Interest Group, Sparsity Partnership for Authorities delivering Rural Services (SPARSE), the Public Transport Consortium LGA Special Interest Group and Patrol / Bus Lane Adjudication Service Joint Committee.

3. Current Allowances Scheme in Devon

3.1 The basic allowance is intended to recognise the time devoted by members to their work and covers constituency duties; correspondence; telephone calls; attendance at meetings of the County Council, committees, joint committees and working parties or other authorised meetings; meetings of the Local Government Association not covered under the LGA Scheme of Allowances; single member duties; attendance at seminars and conferences, outside bodies and Parish Council meetings.

3.2 However, Schedule 1 of the scheme lists those approved duties, conferences and meetings that qualify for travel and subsistence allowances. This includes the approved conference of the Local Government Association Annual Conference, LGA General Assembly and National Children's and Adults Services Conference and County Councils Network Annual Conference.

3.3 Any variation requires the approval of the budget holder, the Head of Democratic Services, in liaison with the Leader of the Council as appropriate, in accordance with framework outlined in Procedures Minute 33 (5/6/18). This revised procedure allows Members to make a case for external training opportunities. However, attendance at any other conference requires the specific approval of the Leader of the Council with a presumption that attendance will not be permitted unless a case is made.

3.4 The list of approved duties for travel and subsistence also includes;

- meetings of the County Council, Committees, Joint Committees, Fora, Working Parties / Panels properly constituted to which Members have been appointed by the County Council;
- Duties necessarily undertaken by the Chair of the Cabinet, Cabinet Members or Chairs, Vice-Chairs of Committees or Working Parties/Panels;
- Meetings of those European, National, Regional and County-wide bodies to which representatives have been appointed by the County Council and a number of other outside body appointments; and
- Seminars, briefings or training events arranged for the benefit of Members of the Council.

3.5 A small number of other duties qualify for travel expenses only such as site visits, official openings of Council premises, launches of Council services and meetings of Town or Parish Councils in the electoral division of the Member concerned.

3.6 It is therefore clear that the scheme does not currently permit travel expenses for LGA Policy Board appointments, other than the ones specifically listed. They are not an 'approved duty'.

4. LGA Political Groups Appointments Process.

4.1 Outlined in Appendix 1 are the current Policy Boards, other LGA Structures and Workforce Employer Bodies:

4.2 The LGA Political parties all have a different mechanism for making the appointments and these are listed below.

4.3 The **LGA Labour Group** appointments to LGA member structures are reviewed each year by the elected group officers with appointments made to LGA Leadership Board, LGA Policy Boards and Employer Workforce Bodies. All Labour Councillors on LGA member councils are eligible to self-nominate for the roles and appointments are then made by Group Officers, using the [Labour Group Appointment Principles](#).

4.4 The **LGA Conservative Group** annually appoints a number of Conservative Councillors to serve on the various member bodies at the LGA, including all the Policy Boards outlined in appendix 1. They send nomination forms to all Conservative group leaders in June asking for up to three names from their authorities, including their area(s) of expertise. Appointments are made by the Conservative Group Leader, in consultation with lead members.

4.5 The **LGA Liberal Democrat Group** nominates member places via an electronic and postal ballot of all Liberal Democrat Councillors in LGA member authorities. Councillors are invited to submit expressions of interest, and bi-ennial elections are held.

4.6 The **LGA Independent Group** invites members to submit applications for appointments on a yearly basis. The Group's elected Leader, Deputy Leader and Treasurer considers all interest and, ensuring a balance across the Group's political affiliations, Local Government tiers, regions and gender, put forward recommendations to the Group Executive Committee for a final decision.

5. Local Government Association (LGA) Allowances Scheme

5.1 Paragraph 6 of the LGA Members Allowances Scheme says that the LGA does not pay Travel and Subsistence for attendance at its own meetings, albeit with a small number of exceptions. As an example the Chair of the Fire Service Management Committee (FSMC) can claim expenses from the LGA, but this does not include ordinary members or substitute members of FSMC.

5.2 The LGA would also cover expenses for those Members who are attending an outside body meeting on behalf of the LGA.

5.3 Paragraph 24 of the LGA scheme states that "Travel and subsistence costs for all other meetings should be met by the member's home authority." This is due to the large number of members involved in their own meetings, so they are unable to cover the cost of all their expenses.

6. Current Position

6.1 One of the issues in Devon is that we are not clear how many Members are appointed to these Boards. This is because some are appointed at District level and that political groups approach Members direct.

6.2 It is not felt that the numbers are high, therefore the impact on the budget is not significant, but budget codes would not reflect that Members had attended 'Policy Board' event.

6.3 It is felt that clarity and consistency on the approach would be beneficial.

7. Conclusion / Summary

7.1 In summary, whilst the Council supports attendance at LGA events, training and other Boards, it would seem sensible that a process is adopted to better grasp and share the learning of Members attending those events as well as managing the financial commitment of attendance at these Boards.

8. Financial considerations

8.1 It is unlikely there will be any significant financial considerations as many of these requests are approved, albeit on a more ad hoc basis.

9. Risk management considerations

9.1 No unmanageable risks have been identified.

10. Equality, Environmental Impact and Public Health Considerations.

10.1 No equality, environmental, climate change impact or public health implications have been identified.

JAN SHADBOLT

Electoral Divisions: All

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers:

None

Contact for enquiries: Karen Strahan 382264

Room No: G31, County Hal

LGA Policy Boards:

Children & Young People Board: The Children and Young People Board has responsibility for Local Government Association (LGA) activity on the wellbeing of children and young people, including education, social care, health and early years.

City Regions Board: The City Regions Board represents the interests of city areas. Its remit includes growth, transport infrastructure, skills and wider public service reform.

Community Wellbeing Board: The Community Wellbeing Board has responsibility for Local Government Association's (LGA) activity in the areas of the wellbeing of adults, including lifelong learning, training, health and social care and for the wellbeing of all people in the areas of community cohesion, asylum and immigration.

Culture, Tourism & Sport Board: The Culture, Tourism and Sport Board has responsibility for Local Government Association's (LGA) activity in championing the role that all cultural and sporting services play in making places where people want to live, visit and work.

Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board: The Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board provides strategic oversight of the LGA's policy, regulatory and improvement activity in relation to the economy and environment, including transport, employment and skills, economic development and business support, housing, planning, waste and climate change, in line with the LGA priorities and any specific regulatory and LGA European lobbying priorities as they relate to this activity.

Improvement & Innovation Board: The purpose of the Improvement and Innovation Board is to provide strategic oversight of all the Local Government Association's (LGA) policy and improvement activity in relation to councils improving their performance and productivity.

People & Places Board: The People and Places Board seeks to develop greater clarity on the role of nonmetropolitan authorities in enabling economic growth for the long-term benefit of residents, and on how transformation in public services can enable that.

Resources Board: The LGA's Resources Board shapes and develops the Association's policies and programmes in line with the LGA priorities in relation to: Local Government Finance; Strategic Finance; Welfare Reform; and Workforce issues.

Safer & Stronger Communities Board: The purpose of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board is to provide strategic oversight of all the LGA's policy, regulatory and improvement activity in the promotion of the safety of local communities, including issues of crime and anti-social behaviour, policing, licensing, and emergency planning.

Fire Services Management Committee: The role of the Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) is to represent as an LGA body the views and concerns of the fire community ensuring that local circumstances have a voice in the national context. FSMC will take the lead on behalf of the LGA: on the future direction of the fire and rescue service; improvement within the sector; and on all other day-to-day issues (e.g. technical or operational matters) affecting fire authorities. **[Please note that you must be a serving member of Fire and Rescue Authorities to be nominated to this body]**

Fire Commission: The Fire Commission shall provide the forum within the LGA for all Fire and Rescue services throughout England and Wales. The Fire Commission will act in a way that complements the principles and corporate priorities of the LGA as a whole.
[Please note that you must be a serving member of Fire and Rescue Authorities to be nominated to this body]

There are also a number of other LGA bodies including the LGA Executive, Leadership Board and Councillors Forum, National and Regional Member Peers,

Other LGA Structures:

- Audit Committee
- Commercial Advisory Board
- IDeA Board
- Local Government Association (Properties) Ltd
- Local Government Management Board
- Fire Services Management Committee
- Fire Commission

Workforce Employer Bodies:

- National Employers Organisation for School Teachers (NEOST)
- JNC for Teachers in Residential Establishments
- Soulbury Committee
- JNC for Youth and Community Workers
- NJC for Local Authority Fire & Rescue Services / NJC for Brigade Managers of Local Authorities' Fire & Rescue Services / Middle Managers Negotiating Body
- JNC for Coroners
- Local Government Services Employers NJC inc. Chief Executives NJC, Chief Officers NJC and Workshops for the Blind
- Local Government Pensions Committee
- CEEP UK Executive
- CEMR – Employers' Platform