



Council
2 May 2017
Allowances and expenses 2017-18

Classification	Public
Purpose	For decision
Issue	Review of allowances and expenses
Recommendation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To introduce a reading fee of £12.50 per case for Investigating Committee members.2. To introduce a screening fee of £12.50 per case for Investigating Committee members.
Financial and resourcing implications	Some minor increases are expected to accrue from these proposals and are contained within budget.
Equality and diversity implications	A fair system of remuneration and expenses for non-executives is a key factor in facilitating the involvement of people from a wide diversity of backgrounds.
Communications implications	None
Annexes	None
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Background

1. The Remuneration and Appointments Committee's (RaAC) terms of reference include a requirement to review the remuneration and expenses of non-executives annually and make recommendations to Council.
2. The RaAC meeting on 1 March 2017 considered a number of the allowances paid to non-executives and made the recommendations set out in this report.

Discussion

Investigating Committee reading fees

3. Members of the Investigating Committee (IC) are currently able to claim a fixed rate of £75 per meeting as a reading fee. Concerns have been raised by IC members that the current reading fees are inadequate for the work involved. This is for two principal reasons:
 - a. The size of the bundles per case has increased
 - b. The number of cases considered at each meeting has increased.
4. There is also a concern that the amount of pre-reading may begin to act as a disincentive to members continuing to serve on the IC and that this issue needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
5. Two alternative approaches to making a change in reading fees were identified:
 - a. Increasing the flat rate from its current £75 to a higher level
 - b. Introducing a 'per case' reading fee.
6. There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. The flat rate fee is simpler to administer but also relies on a balance being struck between those occasions when the Committee has a full agenda (which can be twelve or more cases) to shorter meetings when the IC has been able to conclude its business by lunch time. Conversely the flat rate fee per bundle is scrupulously fair in its approach but is slightly more onerous to administer.
7. The RaAC reviewed historic data on the number of cases considered by the IC and the amount of reading fees claimed and concluded that it would be more appropriate to pay a reading fee per case of £12.50 than the flat rate of £75 per meeting. Based on 2016 data this would have resulted in an increase in expenditure on reading fees from £ 3,900 to £5,703.10.

Screening fees

8. Registrant members of the IC are required to undertake an additional role in relation to cases which is known as 'screening'. Historically no payment has been

made for this role. The reason for this has been that in its original form, screeners had a very limited role and the decision was largely a formality.

9. The screener's role has changed in a number of ways in recent years:
 - a. The introduction of 'Threshold Criteria' now requires the screener to exercise a greater degree of judgment and to provide reasons for their decisions.
 - b. Screeners are being asked to close cases which are not progressed using the 'Initial Closure Procedure'.
10. The RaAC considered it is only fair given these increased expectations that additional fees are paid to screeners for their role. It agreed that the simplest approach would be to agree a flat fee for screening at the same level as the reading fee.
11. In addition it should be noted that a screener cannot then take part in discussion of a particular case at an IC meeting, therefore there would be no 'double charging' of screening and reading fees.
12. For both the IC Reading Fee and the Screening Fee it is anticipated that the payment will be backdated to 1 April 2017.
13. Based on the number of cases considered in 2016, the cost of the screening fee is anticipated to be around £800 per annum.

Other areas considered

14. The RaAC considered the general day rate allowance of £306, whether an additional fee should be paid to the Chairs of fitness to practise committees and the expenses policy. It concluded that no changes to the day rate or expenses were required in 2017-18. However, the Committee asked the Executive to undertake further research in respect of payments to chairs.
15. The Committee agreed with a proposal from the Executive that as part of the follow-up to the recent recruitment campaigns, past registrant applicants should be surveyed to see if the level of the day rate was acting as a disincentive to applicants.

Recommendations:

1. To introduce a reading fee of £12.50 per case for Investigating Committee members.
2. To introduce a screening fee of £12.50 per case for Investigating Committee members.