

## **Employment Committee**

Meeting to be held on Monday, 13 September 2021

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| Electoral Division affected:<br>None |
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### **Review of Coroner Salaries and Fees 2021/22**

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#### **Executive Summary**

Coroners' pay is set by the local authority for the coronial area having regard to recommended national pay scales negotiated between the Coroner's Society for England and Wales (CSEW) and the Local Government Association (LGA). The Joint Committee for Coroners in its Circular No 66, dated 10 August 2021, has confirmed that agreement has been reached on the pay award for 2021/22.

This report seeks agreement from the Committee to implement the pay award of 1.5% across the Coroner salaries and the fees paid to the Assistant Coroners.

#### **Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to consider the report and

- i) Agree the salary for the Senior Coroner and two Area Coroners as set out in the report, having regard to the guidance received from the Joint Negotiating Committee for Coroners, with effect from 1 April 2021; and
- ii) Agree that the fees currently paid to the Assistant Coroners be increased by 1.5% as set out in the report, with effect from 1 April 2021.

#### **Background and Advice**

The role of a coroner is to investigate deaths within their jurisdiction where the cause of death is unknown; or where the person died in custody; or where the death was violent or unnatural.

Coroners are independent judicial office holders under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and the Chief Coroner, but the council has a duty to provide all necessary resources to support the coroner service and is responsible for the remuneration of all coroners within their administrative area.

A governance agreement between Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and Lancashire County Council was agreed in December 2017 whereby Blackburn with

Darwen Borough Council would be responsible for 23% of the salary costs associated with the Senior Coroner and one Area Coroner, 23% of the salary costs of the administrative team and also the Coroner Services Manager, together with 50% of the direct costs associated with running the service.

Coroners' pay is to be set by the local authority for the coronial area having regard to recommended national pay scales negotiated between the Coroner's Society for England and Wales (CSEW) and the Local Government Association (LGA). The Joint Negotiating Committee for Coroners issued Coroners' Circular 66 in August 2021 which gave guidance on Coroners' pay and provided an update to Circular 63, which was issued in November 2018 in relation to the Coroners' pay agreement for 2018-2020.

### **Senior Coroner**

In March 2018 the Committee agreed a salary of £154,735 for the Senior Coroner effective from 1 April 2020. Circular 66 has confirmed that the salary for the Senior Coroner should be increased by 1.5% with effect from 1 April 2021. The Committee is therefore asked to confirm a salary of £157,056 for the Senior Coroner with effect from 1 April 2021. The revised salary would be inclusive of an out of hours (OOHs) payment relating to both legislative provisions and faith deaths.

### **Area Coroners**

In March 2018 the committee agreed a salary of £104,040 for both Area Coroners, effective from 1 April 2020. Circular 66 has confirmed that the salary for the Area Coroners should be increased by 1.5% with effect from 1 April 2021. The Committee is therefore asked to confirm a salary of £105,601 with effect from 1 April 2021. The revised salary would be inclusive of an out of hours (OOHs) payment relating to both legislative provision and faith deaths.

### **Assistant Coroners**

The guidance issued in Circular 66 suggested a daily rate payable to Assistant Coroners of between £397 and £479. The Committee have been asked to agree a two-tier system of fees payable to Assistant Coroners dependant on the complexity of the inquest being heard.

The Committee is therefore asked to confirm a fee of £397 per day payable to Assistant Coroners dealing with simple inquests and a fee of £479 per day for Assistant Coroners dealing with jury and complex health inquests.

### **Consultations**

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council have been consulted on these proposals and support the proposed increase.

## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Risk management**

All Coroners can refer their proposed salary to the Lord Chancellor who would make a final judgement. Whilst it is not known how long this would take and we cannot prejudge the Lord Chancellor's decision, it is believed that the Lord Chancellor would confirm that the pay award for 2021/22 should be implemented.

### **Finance**

The costs outlined in this report will be met from within the Coroner Services budget. In addition, 23% of the salary costs of the Senior Coroner and one Area Coroner will be met by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council under the terms of a Governance Agreement between the county council and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. The figure of 23% is based on the population of the former jurisdiction as a percentage of the overall population of the new jurisdiction.

## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers**

| Paper                | Date        | Contact/Tel                  |
|----------------------|-------------|------------------------------|
| Coroners Circular 66 | August 2021 | Janet Mather<br>01772 531123 |

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A