

Employment Committee

Meeting to be held on Monday, 13 September 2021

Electoral Division affected: None

Review of Assistant Coroner Fee Rates

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

In March 2018 the Committee agreed a revised fee for Assistant Coroners of £400.00 per day and £200.00 per half day and that the fee would rise by 2% in April 2019 and 2% in April 2020. This was on the basis that the Assistant Coroners did not undertake the more complex inquests and as such would not be placed at the top of the fee range.

However, some of our Assistant Coroners are now being asked to deal with Jury inquests and complex health inquests and as such the fee payable for these types of inquests should be £472.00 per day and £236.00 per half day.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to consider the report and

- i) Approve that the fee paid to Assistant Coroners who deal with Jury inquests and complex mental health inquests will be £478.00 per day and £236.00 per half day; and
- ii) Approve that the fee paid to Assistant Coroners for all other inquests will remain at £416.00 per day and £208.00 per half day.

Background and Advice

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 Negotiating Committee provided guidance and an update in Circular 63 in November 2018 indicating that with effect from 1 April 2020 the fee band would be between the range of £391.00 and £472.00.

The Committee agreed to a daily rate of £400.00 per day and £200.00 per day in March 2018 as this reflected the level of work that our Assistant Coroners were asked to deal with, and they were therefore not moved to the top of the range.

In March 2019 the Committee were asked to agree an uplift of 2% effective in April 2019 and April 2020, again on the basis that our Assistant Coroners were not asked to deal with the more complex cases.

During the last twelve months we have asked our Assistant Coroners to be responsible for both Jury inquests and more complex health inquests. These types of inquests should be paid at the top of the Assistant Coroner fee band, i.e. £472.00 per full day and £236.00 per half day. It has also been recognised that the service is being requested to undertake more and more complex inquests. Therefore, there will continue to be a need to have a higher rate available to offer our Assistant Coroners for such inquests.

The Senior Coroner will determine when an Assistant Coroner is asked to undertake the more complex inquests and it is intended that, where an Assistant Coroner is asked to undertake any other type of inquest, these will be paid at the lower rate.

Consultations

The Senior Coroner has been consulted on these proposals and fully supports them.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

All Coroners can refer their proposed salary/fee 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 the Assistant Coroner's fee for more complex cases at the top of the range, i.e. £472.00 per day.

Assistant Coroners, by their very nature, are casual members of staff who do not have to accept the work we offer them. If we do not pay the correct rate for these types of inquests, we may find ourselves in a position where we do not have enough Coroners to hear the more complex inquests.

Finance

The costs outlined in this report can be contained from within the existing Coroner Services budget. In addition, two of our Assistant Coroners will be supported by the Ministry of Justice in their role as Assistant Coroners and as such will no longer submit claims for this work to the Authority.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Coroners Circular No 63	Nov 2018	Janet Mather
Coroners Circular No 62	Jan 2018	Tel: 01772 531123

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A