

Committee(s): Corporate Services Committee	Dated: 6 September 2023
Subject: Coroners 2023/24 Pay Settlement	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	8: We have access to the skills and talent we need.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Y
If so, how much?	Circa £6k per annum
What is the source of Funding?	Existing City Fund local risk budget
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes
Report of: Chief Operating Officer	For Decision
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Summary

The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Coroners notified on 5 June 2023 that they have reached agreement on a pay award for Coroners. The award is for a 3.5% increase to all salaries and day rates with effect from April 2023. This follows the late agreement of 1.56% for 2022-23 in March 2023, backdated to April 2022.

It is currently a function of the Corporate Services Committee to increase the salaries and day rates of the Senior Coroner and Assistant Coroner in the City of London where the JNC agrees such an increase.

The requirement for the Corporate Services Committee to formally approve such increases, introduces delay in the implementation of the pay award. Contracts of staff state that any increases agreed by the JNC are subject to the approval of the Committee. However, there appears to be limited circumstances in which this would not be the decision of the Committee. It is therefore proposed that where there are no wider issues or interpretation required of the agreed pay award, that the decision to implement the award is delegated to officers.

Recommendation

Corporate Services Committee are recommended to agree:

- That the salary and day rates of the Senior Coroner and the day rate of the Assistant Coroners are increased by 3.5% with effect from 1 April 2023 in line with the JNC agreement.
- That for future pay awards, the Corporate Services Committee authorise the Chief Operating Officer in liaison with the Chief People Officer and Executive Director of Environment to implement the award.

Main Report

Background

1. The Corporation appoints a Part Time Senior Coroner and Assistant Coroners to fulfil its Coronial functions. Coroners' pay is nationally determined by the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Coroners. Following a national review of Coroners' pay a report outlining the City Corporation interpretation of the national pay parameters and rationale for how local pay levels have been set within these parameters was approved through the urgency procedure dated 23rd July 2019.
2. It was a function of the Establishment Committee at the time, now the Corporate Services Committee, to authorise the increase to salaries and day rates of the Senior Coroner and Assistant Coroner in the City Corporation in line with the JNC agreement for an increase, where it chooses to follow the recommendation of the JNC for Coroners.

Coroners' Pay Award 2023-24

3. The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Coroners notified on 5 June 2023 that they have reached agreement on a pay award for Coroners for the 2023-24 pay round. This stated:

"With effect from 1st April 2023, local salaries and day rates for individuals derived from the JNC arrangements below should be increased by 3.5%."

4. It is therefore recommended that the Corporate Services Committee follow the recommendation of the JNC and that Senior Coroner and Assistant Coroner rates in the City of London are uplifted by 3.5% with effect from 1 April 2023. Table 1 below outlines the changes to the rates in the City of London.

Table 1: Coroner Pay Rates		New Rate (1 April 2023)	Existing Rate (1 April 2022)	Prior Rate (1 April 2021)
Percentage Increase		3.50%*	1.56%**	
Senior Coroner (Part Time)	Salary	£22,200	£21,449	£21,120
	Day Rate	£555	£536	£528
Assistant Coroner	Day Rate	£503	£486	£479

*Notified in June 2023, backdated to April 2023.

**Notified in February 2023, backdated to April 2022, paid in March 2023.

The overall financial impact of this decision is approximately £6k, based on actual claims of the Senior Coroner and Assistant Coroners from April 2022 to March 2023.

Table 2: Cost Impact of Award	Salary Increase	Claimed Days (Apr22-Mar23)	Cost of Days	Total Cost
Senior Coroner (PT)	£751	199 x £19	£3,781	£4,532
Assistant Coroner	N/A	0* x £17	£0	£0
+ On Costs				£6,109

* No claims were submitted by Assistant Coroners in the 22/23 financial year, as at July 2023, 4.75 days have been claimed between April and July in 23/24.

Delegation of Future Pay Awards to Officers for Implementation

5. In recent years, JNC agreement has come long after the effective date of the agreement. The 2022-23 agreement, notified in mid-February 2023, required an urgent approval to ensure that the pay award could be implemented for March payroll to ensure that pay uplifts were received in the correct financial tax year.
6. The current agreement was notified in early June, and although there is not the same urgency with regards the tax year, the local requirement for the Corporate Services Committee to approve such increases, introduces delay in the implementation of the pay award.
7. The contracts of Coroners and Assistant Coroners state that any increases agreed by the JNC are subject to the approval of the Committee.

“The rate of pay will increase in line with recommendations by the national Joint Negotiating Committee for Coroners, subject to approval by the City of London Corporation’s Establishment Committee.”

8. However, in reality there appears to be limited circumstances in which this would not be the will of the Committee. It is therefore proposed that where there are no wider issues for interpretation or decision required of the agreed pay award, that it is recommended that the decision to implement any pay award agreed by the JNC is authorised to officers. This is to enable timely and efficient implementation of the pay award.
9. It is therefore recommended that for future pay awards, the Corporate Services Committee authorise the Chief Operating Officer in liaison with the Chief People Officer and Executive Director of Environment to implement the award.

Corporate and Strategic Implications

- a) Strategic implications – None.
- b) Financial implications – The estimated increase in salary cost of £6k per annum can be met from the Executive Director Environment’s existing local risk budget.
- c) Resource implications – To support the continued recruitment and retention of skilled Coroner workforce.
- d) Legal implications – None.
- e) Risk implications – none.
- f) Equalities implications – The existing practice means that employees working in the Coroner role are paid and recompensed differently to other professional groups. The independence of pay awards means that they may be paid larger or smaller increases than other employees and may receive different pay to those elsewhere undertaking work that could be assessed as being of equal value. However, this differential stems from the roles being distinguished at a national Local Government level as being different enough to require distinct negotiating groups. This creates a separate market for Coroners and therefore provides a reasonable rationale (material factors defence) for differential treatment.
- g) Climate implications – None.
- h) Security implications – None

Appendices

None

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