

**Report to:** Governance Committee

**Date of meeting:** 4 March 2025

**By:** Deputy Chief Executive

**Title:** East Sussex Assistant Coroners Pay Awards for 22/23, 23/24 and 24/25

**Purpose:** To agree new daily rates of pay for East Sussex Assistant Coroners for 22/23, 23/24 and 24/25 in line with the JNC Framework

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

**The Governance Committee is recommended to agree the new daily rates of pay for Assistant Coroners for 22/23, 23/24 and 24/25 in line with the JNC Framework, as set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report.**

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### 1. Background

1.1 The Coroners' Society and the Local Government Association have a Joint Negotiating Committee to reach agreement in principle on the approach to full time and part-time Senior Coroner and Assistant Coroner pay and other terms and conditions. A new national pay framework and guidance on local determination of pay within that framework were agreed in November 2017 and January 2018 and are set out in JNC Circulars 61 and 62. The Council adopts this JNC framework in terms of the Coroner Service.

1.2 JNC Circular 61 sets out that:

*"We would expect a broad correlation between the pay of a Senior Coroner and the daily rate determined for Assistant Coroners. Where the Senior Coroner is paid at the mid-point or below [of the Senior Coroner pay range] then the mid-point of the Assistant's range should be a ceiling. Where the Coroner role is paid above the mid-point [of the Senior Coroner pay range] then that same figure should be a floor."*

Apart from reference to the mid-point ceiling or mid-point floor, the JNC Framework only sets out that in determining daily rates of pay for Assistant Coroners there should be 'broad' correlation between the pay of the Senior Coroner and the Assistant Coroner daily rate. The decision as to a daily rate for Assistant Coroners is therefore discretionary.

1.3 The last pay award for East Sussex Assistant Coroners was for 21/22. In 21/22 the East Sussex Senior Coroner's salary (full time equivalent) was below the mid-point of the 21/22 Senior Coroner pay range (JNC Circular 66) and therefore the Assistant Coroner daily rate could not exceed the mid-point ceiling of the Assistant Coroner pay range, which was £438.

1.4 Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) and West Sussex County Council (WSCC) agreed to both pay their Assistant Coroners the daily rate of £436 in 21/22 on the basis that the West Sussex and Brighton and Hove jurisdictions were preparing to merge (they subsequently merged on 1 April 2023). To achieve a pan Sussex approach and because there was a possibility that the East Sussex jurisdiction might also merge with these jurisdictions, ESCC also agreed a daily rate for 21/22 of £436.

1.5 Subsequent decisions by ESCC regarding the increased pay rates for 22/23 and 23/24 had been on hold pending confirmation of BHCC and WSCC pay rates for 22/23 and 23/24 and clarification regarding the potential merger of the East Sussex jurisdiction.

1.6 On 9 August 2024, the Ministry of Justice confirmed the Lord Chancellor's decision that the East Sussex area did not need to merge with the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove jurisdiction.

1.7 Pay awards for East Sussex Assistant Coroners for 22/23, 23/24 and 24/25 now require determination.

## 2 Supporting information

2.1 Early indications from WSCC and BHCC suggested that they were going to increase their daily rate from £436 to £442.80 for 22/23. In June 2024, however, WSCC and BHCC finally confirmed that they had agreed to retain a daily rate of £436 for 22/23 and to pay a daily rate of £503 for 23/24 and for 24/25. The mid-point for WSCC and BHCC Assistant Coroners is also set by the pay of the Senior Coroner in that area and therefore may differ to that in East Sussex.

2.2 For 22/23, the East Sussex Senior Coroner's pay remained below the mid-point ceiling of the Senior Coroner pay range (JNC Circular 67), determining the mid-point ceiling for Assistant Coroners pay in that year as £444.50. ESCC could therefore match a daily rate of £436 for 22/23. ESCC could not match WSCC and BHCC's daily rate of £503 for 23/24 and 24/25, as this rate is above the mid-point ceiling for the East Sussex Assistant Coroner pay range, set by the East Sussex Senior Coroner's salary remaining below the mid-point of the Senior Coroner pay range for these years (JNC Circulars 68 & 69).

2.3 As the East Sussex jurisdiction will not be merging with the West Sussex, Brighton and Hove jurisdiction, mirroring BHCC and WSCC pay rates is no longer a significant consideration, other than seeking to achieve where possible a pan Sussex approach.

2.4 The pay ranges, as set out in the JNC Circulars, along with the mid-range point (ceiling for ESCC) and ESCC and BHCC/WSCC pay rates are set out below for information:

Year	JNC Circular	Assistant Coroner Pay Range increase (%)	Assistant Coroner Pay Range	Assistant Coroner Mid-Point Ceiling ESCC	ESCC and BHCC/ WSCC rates
2021/22	66	1.5%	£397 - £479	£438	ESCC and BHCC/WSCC - £436
2022/23	67	1.56%	£403 - £486	£444.50	ESCC to be determined. BHCC/WSCC- £436
2023/24	68	3.5%	£417 - £503	£460	ESCC to be determined. BHCC/WSCC -£503
2024/25	69	2.5%	£428 - £516	£472	ESCC to be determined. BHCC/WSCC- £503

## 3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

3.1 Whilst wanting to retain a pan-Sussex approach to Assistant Coroner pay as far as is possible, there is also the need to align with the JNC framework which ESCC has adopted. It is therefore not recommended to apply the same 22/23 BHCC and WSCC rate (£436 – which does not recognise the JNC pay award), but instead to implement the mid-point ceiling of the Assistant Coroner pay range (£444.50) for 22/23.

3.2 In addition, it is recommended to apply payment of a daily rate to East Sussex Assistant Coroners of the mid-point ceiling of the Assistant Coroner pay range for 23/24 (£460) and 24/25 (£472). This would achieve as close to a pan Sussex approach (albeit that there will now be no merger) as is possible whilst applying the JNC Framework.

3.3 The approximate back payment to Assistant Coroners based on total payments made to date in 22/23, 23/24 and 24/25 (and forecast to 31 March 2025) would be approximately £18,770. This amount has been forecast in the Coroner Services budget for 24/25 and would be paid in the financial year 24/25. The total additional cost for 25/26 based on the 24/25 pay award (and until the 25/26 pay award is decided by Governance Committee) is approximately £8,500. Thereafter there will continue to be annual pay awards.

3.4 Set against the above background and supporting information, the Governance Committee is recommended to agree daily rates of pay to East Sussex Assistant Coroners equal to the mid-point ceiling of the Assistant Coroner pay range for 22/23 (£444.50), 23/24 (£460) and 24/25 (£472) in line with the JNC Framework.

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