



**MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on 25 November 2009 at Lecture Theatre, FSHQ at 10:00.**

**PRESENT:** Councillors M Biggin, E Johnson, B Livesley, H Mundry, K Musgrave and C Thorley

**INDEPENDENT MEMBERS:** Mr W Ravenscroft (in the chair) and Mr R Garner

**APOLOGIES:** None

**PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC**

**1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies of absence

**B DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor K Musgrave declared a personal interest in item 5.

**C MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED: that**

[1] the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 30 September 2009, be confirmed as a correct record.

**MAJOR ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION / DECISION**

**2 REVISED CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE THEMES 4-6**

The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning presented Members with the Revised Code of Corporate Governance - Summary Progress Report on core principles 4-6. It was noted that such governance ensured that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service was undertaking tasks in the right way and in a timely and accountable manner.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning highlighted key points within the report. Members were informed that the internet and intranet would give details of the forward plans for Management and Member meetings.

Members discussed training and were informed that the Member Development

Group were currently working on gathering information on the skills and courses that Members had completed to identify where further training was needed. It was felt that this in depth skills audit would enable the Authority to evaluate where the training gaps were. It was noted that 1-to-1s had taken place in the past to identify such information. The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning advised that the training needed to be more Fire Service specific to prevent repetition from the Constituent Authorities. The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that joint training with other authorities would prevent duplication and the revised Code of Conduct that would be launched by Communities and Local Government would form the basis of this. It was agreed that there should be a three year cycle of training to keep Members up to date with changes in legislation and act as a refresher.

Members also raised questions on the progress of the Fire Service's 'Response' consultation panel. Members were notified that this was lead by the Head of Communications and was the Service's main tool for consultation and reached a large number of people. It was suggested by Members that there may be scope for Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to work with the Local Area Community Forums in the consultation process to reduce the number of consultation forums form different services in the area. Members requested that these issues be submitted to the Performance and Overview Committee as part of that Committee's scrutiny function.

**RESOLVED: That**

- [1] the progress on core principles 4-6 of the revised Code of Corporate Governance action plan be noted.

**3**

**RESOLVED: That**

- [1] the amendments proposed to the Protocol on Gifts and Hospitality be approved;
- [2] the new procedure and form for dispensation applications be approved;
- [3] the existing Register of Interests form is retained pending the expected receipt of a new Code of Conduct from CLG;
- [4] the revised documents detailed above are incorporated into the Constitution of the Fire Authority; and
- [5] a further report be brought to the Standards Committee regarding the Register of Interests form when the expected revisions of the Code of Conduct are published.

#### **4 REPORT ON ANNUAL STANDARDS CONFERENCE**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented Members with a report on the attendance of the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees held on 12-13 October 2009 in Birmingham. The event was attended by Councillor B Livesley, Independent Member Mr R Garner, the Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Corporate Support Manager. The report provided a brief overview of the Assembly together with feedback from specific workshop sessions which were attended.

Members suggested that clarification was needed on Member attendance at meetings with regards to leaving meetings early. It was requested that a protocol be devised informing Members how much of a meeting Members would need to be present for before their attendance was recorded. Members suggested that this should be approximately 50% of the meeting however, if this was not possible because of other commitments the Chair should be notified. It was agreed that the Deputy Monitoring Office would present Members with a paper comprising of definitions and a draft protocol at the next annual review of Members attendance in March.

**RESOLVED: That**

[1] the content of the reports be noted.

#### **5 URGENT BUSINESS AND EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Standing Order 3.31 provides that no matter shall be considered at a meeting of the Fire Authority if it is not specified in the Agenda for the meeting unless the Chairman rules that in his opinion the item should be considered as a matter of urgency and specifies the reasons why it is urgent. The ruling, including the reasons for urgency, must be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.

Any matters brought forward under this item which involve the disclosure of exempt information will be considered in Part 2 of the meeting at the end of the business to be transacted.

[1] **Urgent Business**

[2] **Exclusion of press and public**

**RESOLVED:**

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Order 2006, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business listed below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A to the Act in the paragraphs indicated:

Item	Paragraph
No. 6 Appointment of Independent Member of the Standards Committee	2 Information that is likely to reveal the identity of an individual

**PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE**

**6 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented Members with a recommendation to endorse to appointment of a new Independent Member to the Standards committee.

**RESOLVED: That**

- [1] the new Independent Member be appointed subject to the receipt of satisfactory references; and
- [2] the appointment be recommended to the Fire Authority at its meeting in December for approval.