



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on 23 January 2008 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford.**

**PRESENT:** Councilors B Jones (in the Chair), M Byram, D Freear and H Mundry.

**INDEPENDENT MEMBERS:** Mr R Garner and Mr W Ravenscroft

**APOLOGIES:** Mr R Fletcher.,

**1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21 November 2007 be confirmed as a correct record.

**2 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT – ENHANCED PROCEDURE FOR FILTERING COMPLAINTS**

The Deputy Chief Officer, Corporate Services presented a report on the Members Code of Conduct which provided further information for Members on the arrangements for filtering complaints against Members at the local level. By 1 April 2008, the Committee will need to have in place a localised process for the investigation and hearing of complaints. This requirement was set out in recent guidance received from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) following the passing of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Members were reminded that issues around the introduction of the revised Members Code of Conduct had been discussed at the meeting of the Standards Committee on 21 November 2007. A pilot process for filtering complaints had been discussed. However, there was also a further recommendation which committed officers to exploring opportunities for joint working with neighbouring councils, police and fire authorities in this area.

The report set out how a mutually beneficial collaboration for filtering any issues referred to the Standards Committee between the Authority and a neighbouring fire authority (in this case the Monitoring Officer from Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service) would satisfy the

requirements of the new Code. This principal was endorsed by the Committee.

At the November meeting Members were advised that the Code required that the post of chair of the committee be held by an Independent Member Mr W Ravenscroft was nominated by the Committee as the first Chair and the nomination would be put to the Authority for their approval on 13 February 2008.

The initial appointment would be for a 15 month period; until June 2009, when the appointment of an independent chair for Standards would revert to the June AGM of the full Authority. The 1 April deadline is a unique requirement of the new act.

**RESOLVED:** That

- [1] the suggested process for the filtering of complaints be noted and taken to the Authority for approval
- [2] the role of chair of the committee be “ring fenced” for the period of the initial appointment; and
- [3] the nomination of Independent Member Mr W Ravenscroft as chair of the committee be recommended to the Fire Authority for approval until the Authority AGM in June 2009.

### **3 2007 REVIEW OF THE REVISED CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

The paper set out the proposals to enable the Authority to continue its commitment to good governance in local government in light of the introduction of the revised 2007 Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy (CIPFA) / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Code of Corporate Governance.

The contents of the draft action plan were reviewed and a number of areas were highlighted for discussion. It was agreed that updates to the plan would be presented at each meeting of the Committee in a clear format so that Members could easily identify the most recent updates.

**RESOLVED:** That

- [1] the report be received;
- [2] the revised action plan be presented to the next meeting of the Committee; and

[3] the Authority produce an annual statement setting out the Authority's monitoring arrangements for determining and reviewing the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in the preceding year, and outlining any planned changes in the coming period. This will inform the work of our Internal & External Auditors in their annual review of our governance arrangements.

#### **4 URGENT BUSINESS**

##### **Urgent Business**

There were no matters of urgent business considered at the meeting.