



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on 2 April 2008 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford

PRESENT: Councillors B Jones (in the Chair), Mr R Fletcher, D Freear and H Mundry.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS: Mr R Garner and Mr W Ravenscroft (in the Chair).

APOLOGIES: M Byram

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the appointment of the independent Member, Mr W Ravenscroft, as the Chair of the Committee from 1 April 2008, in accordance with the requirements of the new Member Code of Conduct, be noted; and
- [2] the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 23 January 2008 be confirmed as a correct record.

Chair's Announcements

Thanks to previous Chair

The Chair and Members of the Committee expressed their thanks to Cllr Brian Jones for his service to the Authority during his tenure as Chairman of the Standards Committee.

National Assembly of Standards Committees

The Chair raised the issue of attendance at the annual National Assembly of Standards Committees in Birmingham on 13-14 October 2008. It was agreed that the Committee should send four Member representatives and an officer.

2 CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

The Treasurer presented a report setting out the revised Corporate Risk Management Framework document, which set out a number of significant issues requiring the ongoing attention and ownership of the Authority. The Treasurer highlighted the three tiers of 'risk', which were functional, thematic and corporate.

Members noted that on 27 July 2006, Policy Committee Members approved the Corporate Risk Management Framework Document (CRMFD).

Members noted the attached schematic that set out how risk would be managed across the organisation and acknowledged the role of the Standards Committee in

maintaining oversight of the document in the future. This would require Members to monitor ongoing developments and changes to the overall corporate risk management framework.

The CRMFD defines the meaning of Corporate Risk Management within Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service. It set out the structure, processes and methodology by which the Authority identified, analysed and would respond to the significant risks that threaten the Vision, Mission and the delivery of its Corporate Objectives.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the contribution the Framework has made to date to the identification, analysis and response to the Service's business risk exposures be noted; and
- [2] the CRMFD and Appendices be agreed.

3 2007 REVIEW OF THE REVISED CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Treasurer presented a report on the revised Code of Corporate Governance. This report set out 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.

At the meeting of the Standards Committee on 23 January, Members were asked to approve the Code of Corporate Governance initial action plan and were presented with a Service Information System (SIS) Policy document setting out details of how the issue would be managed.

In this report, Members were asked to note the format of the updates to the Code, which were provided in the annex. The updates included did not contain any areas of significant concern and Members were satisfied that progress was being made on all the issues raised.

The Treasurer indicated that in assembling the Statement of Internal Control, he would continue to seek the view of the Standards Committee, through the Chair, prior to the Statement being put to Members of the Policy Committee for approval.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be received;
- [2] the summary of the attached action plan be reviewed; and
- [3] the production of 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, be agreed.

4 CHANGES TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN SERVICE

The Corporate Support Manager presented a report to Members which outlined changes to the operational arrangements for liaising with the Local Government Ombudsman.

Members noted that from April 2008, a central Access and Advice Centre would handle all new complaints and enquiries by telephone, post and email, with the aim of increasing accessibility, operating to consistently high standards, managing complaints and expectations at the outset and providing a more consistent approach to premature complaints.

In addition to the changes outlined, the Chair asked for an overview of the Service policy for dealing with internal and external complaints and Members noted this process and proposals being put in place to improve the process further. Members noted that while the Authority is the subject of very few complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman, the streamlining of the procedure was to be welcomed.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report be noted.

5 URGENT BUSINESS AND EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

(1) Urgent Business

RESOLVED:

There were no items considered under urgent business.

(2) Exclusion of the Press and Public

Recommended:

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 12 A to the Act in the paragraphs indicated:

Item	Paragraph
Summary of Member Attendance	(1) Information relating to an Individual

6 SUMMARY OF MEMBER ATTENDANCE - MAY 2007 TO APRIL 2008

The Corporate Support Manager presented a report which outlined a summary of Member Attendance at the various meetings and Committees of the Authority. Members noted that there was a requirement for the Members' Allowances Scheme for the Standards Committee to review Member attendance at meetings of the Fire Authority, Policy, Standards and Performance and Overview Committees.

The Committee noted the attendance of Members, for the period set out in the report and requested that an amendment be made to the process set out in the report for addressing attendance. Members agreed that the process must involve consultation with the individual Member concerned.

The Members re-stated their view that the acceptable attendance figure should remain at 70% and that the issue of a Member's ability to send a substitute to sub-committee meetings should be considered in detail at the Annual General Meeting of the Authority in June 2008.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the summary of Member attendance at meetings of the Authority and its three main Committees for the municipal year 2007/08 be noted; and
- [2] Members decide whether to refer any attendance issues to the Party Spokesmen on the Authority in the first instance and then the Party Whip at the relevant constituent authority if necessary.