

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on 30 MARCH 2011

3 FUTURE OF STANDARDS

The Monitoring Officer presented Members with a report which provided details of the provisions in the Localism Bill which relate to 'standards'. The report also provided further information on how the 'standards agenda' was developing.

Members' initial views on the preferred way forward with regard to 'standards' were sought and Members were asked to consider making recommendations to the Fire Authority.

The Monitoring Officer explained that there were three key questions that were worthy of consideration at this stage:

i) Should the Fire Authority continue to have a Standards Committee? A supplementary point was also raised - Should it continue to appoint independent members to the Committee?

Members discussed the broad remit of the Authority's Standards Committee and supported the view that the Authority should retain a separate Standards Committee. There was a debate about the involvement of independent members. The Chair felt that this question was for the elected Members at the Fire Authority meeting to consider. Even though no recommendations were made on the point the general feeling was that the impartiality of the independent members was important and that their role and involvement was valuable.

ii) Should the Fire Authority adopt some general principles of conduct that Members would be expected to adhere to?

iii) Should the Fire Authority continue to have some form of Code of Conduct for Members?

The Monitoring Officer suggested that these two questions should be considered together as they were linked. He felt that the ten general principles of public life were sound principles that provided a useful reminder regarding the behaviour of Members. However they were likely to be more effective if they were coupled with a code of conduct. There would no longer be a national code of conduct. Organisations such as the Local Government Association may promote its own version with a view to providing to provide a consistent framework.

Members of the Standards Committee supported the proposals to adopt the ten general principles and to continue to have a local code of conduct. The recommendations that they had agreed in relation to the key questions would be presented to the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be noted; and**
- [2] a report be presented to the Fire Authority meeting (in the new municipal year) recommending that it continues to have a Standards Committee and adopts some general principles of conduct and a code of conduct for Members.**