



MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on 16 May 2012 at, Fire Service HQ at 10:00 am.

PRESENT: Councillors M Biggin, B Crowe, J Leather, H Mundry and B Rudd

Independent Members: Mr W Ravenscroft (in the chair) and Mr R Garner

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B Livesley and Independent Member Mr M McBride

B DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Members' interests

C MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That

the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 28 March 2012, be confirmed as a correct record.

ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION / DECISION

2 NEW STANDARDS REGIME

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced this report with the intention of securing further guidance from Members about the approach to the new standards regime for the Fire Authority.

The report updated the Committee on a number of things that had occurred since the previous meeting. It also highlighted that the Regulations which were necessary in order to fully understand the key 'interests' requirement of the new regime, had not been enacted by the Government. He explained that some elements of the new regime could be introduced at a later date than the main elements (through transitional provisions being considered by the Government). Given the uncertainty and lack of clarity, he suggested that it would make sense

for the new arrangements to be reviewed as soon as six months after their adoption.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services requested that the Committee work through those items that could be progressed and were detailed within the report and attached Appendices. In addition, he provided the Committee with a further draft of the Members' Code of Conduct for discussion.

Members discussed each point, and provided guidance to allow officers to finalise the arrangements that would be presented to the Fire Authority at its annual meeting.

The following bullet points provide a summary of the views expressed by the Committee:

- The committee (with responsibility for 'standards' issues, amongst other responsibilities) should be known as Governance and Constitution Committee.
- The terms of reference of Governance and Constitution Committee should be those contained in Appendix 1 to the report.
- The sub-committee (with responsibility for dealing with allegations about breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct) should be known as Members' Code of Conduct Sub-Committee
- The term of reference of the Members' Code of Conduct Sub-Committee should be that contained in Appendix 1 to the report
- Membership of the Members' Code of Conduct Sub-Committee should be drawn from the membership of Governance and Constitution (excluding independent members) with three Members required
- The Code of Conduct that was supplied at the meeting should be adopted (as an interim measure until such time as there was greater clarity about disclosable pecuniary interests) subject to the addition of a requirement for Members not to bring their office or the Authority into disrepute whilst acting in their official capacity
- That officers should continue to pursue the concept of a pool of Independent Persons'

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be required to act upon the guidance provided by the Committee and produce a report concerning the arrangements for a new standards regime for the Fire Authority and present this at the annual meeting in June.**