

8. The 2008/09 Annual Report of the Standards Committee

Purpose of report

1. To update the Authority in respect of Standards Committee proceedings during 2008/09 and to put forward recommendations with regards to the functions and procedures of the Standards Committee.

Recommendations

The Standards Committee recommends that:

- i) the Annual Report be noted by the Authority;
- ii) the Fire & Rescue Authority notes the concerns of the Standards Committee at the low level of attendance by Members at Training Seminars, and the concerns raised for the Corporate Governance of the Authority;
- iii) the Fire & Rescue Authority and Group Leaders encourage Members to attend future training events; and
- iv) the Authority approves the addendum to the Committee's Terms of Reference, as follows:

“Setting up an Assessment Sub-Committee or making arrangements with an adjoining Authority with regard to conducting assessments of complaints”

Background

2. The Standards Committee has been entrusted by the Authority to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the Members of the Authority.
3. On 8 May 2008 the responsibility for considering complaints that a Member may have breached the Code of Conduct moved from the Standards Board for England to the Standards Committees of local authorities, which has greatly extended the role and responsibilities of the Committee.
4. There were two full meetings of the Committee in 2008/09, and one meeting of an Assessment Committee to deal with a complaint against an Authority Member.

The Annual Report 2008/09

5. The Annual Report (Appendix 1) sets out the Membership of the Standards Committee, its Terms of Reference, and a summary of the business transacted by the Committee during the year. The two main items addressed by the Committee during the year were:
 - The drafting and adopting of procedures and criteria for the local assessment of allegations that Members had breached the Authority's Code of Conduct, and
 - The review and development of the Member Development Programme.

Conclusion / Summary

6. 2008 was a pivotal year for Standards Committees, as they assumed responsibility for Local Assessments of allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct by Authority Members.
7. In addition, when considering the Member Development Programme the Committee raised concerns at the low level of attendance at Member Training Events, and the concerns this raises for the corporate governance of the Authority.

Corporate Considerations

8. A Business Impact Analysis form is attached at Appendix 2 to measure and address the proposals contained in this report. The form contains information on the potential resource implications, legal issues, strategic policy links, equality / ethical issues and risk management implications.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1- The 2008/09 Annual Report of the Standards Committee to the Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority

Appendix 2- Business Impact Analysis Form

Background papers

- Local Assessment Procedures and Criteria (Standards Committee Meeting 17 April 2009)
- Member Development Plan and Member Training Report (Standards Committee Meeting 21 November 2008)

Contact Officer

Alan McLaughlin, The Monitoring Officer, Herefordshire County Council, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR1 1SH Tel: (01432) 260000.
Email: amclaughlin@herefordshire.gov.uk