

13. Annual Report from the Standards Committee to the Fire and Rescue Authority

Purpose of report

1. To inform the Authority of the proceedings of the Standards Committee since the last AGM of the Authority.
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Recommendations

The Standards Committee recommends:

- i. That the Authority adopts a voluntary Code of Conduct for Members when the current Standards regime expires;*
- ii. That the voluntary Code should mirror the current Code, save where amendments are required arising from the provisions of the Localism Act;*
- iii. That the Authority should have regard to the response of the constituent bodies when dealing with this matter;*
- iv. That Members should continue to receive appropriate training in standards and ethics; and*
- v. That the Authority notes the Committee's Annual Report to the Authority.*

Terms of Reference and Composition

2. The Standards Committee is concerned to ensure that Authority Members observe their Code of Conduct and the Committee is empowered to deal with any allegations that Members have breached the Code of Conduct.
3. The Committee is comprised of 5 independent Members and 2 Members appointed from the Authority. The current membership is as follows:

Mr Richard Gething (Chair),

Mr Colin Emeny, Dr Murray Mylechreest, Mr Robert Rogers, and Mr David Stevens all Independent Members; and

Cllrs John Goodwin and Gay Hopkins appointed by the Authority.

Standards Committee Proceedings since June 2010

4. The Committee is pleased to report to the Authority that no complaints have been made against any Member of the Authority, alleging breach of the Code of Conduct during the past 12 months.

5. The Committee met on 21 September 2010 and 17 March 2011. The main items addressed were:

The Future of the Local Government Standards Framework:

- i) This included the Localism Bill proposals to abolish the Standards regime by April 2012 and to allow Authorities to make their own arrangements to govern propriety and behaviour.
- ii) The Committee noted that the Bill proposed to make it a criminal offence to fail, without reasonable excuse, to comply with obligations imposed by regulations to register or declare personal interests or to take part in authority business when prevented from so doing by such regulations. The Bill also proposed that the Authority may voluntarily adopt a Code of Conduct for Members and that breaches of same could be dealt with by training and/or censure (while suspension from the Authority would no longer be an option, censure could include removal from a Committee).
- iii) In view of these proposals the Committee resolved to recommend that the Authority should agree the actions proposed at i to iv above.
- iv) The Committee noted that the Authority agreed on 16 February 2011 to extend the term of appointment of the Independent Members of the Standards Committee until 30 June 2012 or until the Standards Committee is disbanded, whichever is the sooner.

Consideration of the Authority's Governance Review:

6. The Standards Committee welcomed the opportunity to consider the proposals for the review of the structure of the Authority's Committees and their terms of reference and agreed to support same, as presented, and as agreed by the Authority on 28 September 2010.

Dispensations

7. All members of the Authority sought dispensations to allow them to be involved in the consideration of matters concerning the out-going Chief Fire Officer, the Authority and Worcestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council. At the September 2010 meeting the Committee granted the dispensations as sought and at the March 2011 meeting extended them until 31 March 2012 as the matter remained unresolved.

Financial Considerations

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are financial issues that require consideration	N	

Legal Considerations

Consideration	Yes/ No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are legal issues e.g. contractual and procurement, reputational issues that require consideration	Y	To comply with the statutory requirement to make an Annual Report; To safeguard the reputations of the Authority and its Members.

Additional Considerations

8. The table below sets out any additional issues arising from the proposals contained in this report and identifies the relevant paragraphs in the report where such issues are addressed.

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
Resources (e.g. Assets, ICT, Human Resources, Training & Development, Sustainability).	Y	Recommendation iv
Strategic Policy Links (e.g. IRMP, Authority Plan, Equality & Diversity, Partnerships, Environmental Impact).	N	
Risk Management / Health & Safety (e.g. risk management and control measures, risk register score).	Y	The whole report
Consultation with Representative Bodies	Y	Recommendation iii

Supporting Information

Background papers – Agenda and papers for Standards Committee Meetings held on 21 September 2010 and 17 March 2011.

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