



## **AGENDA ITEM: 17**

### **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**15<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

#### **THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Report by Colin Everett,  
Clerk to the Authority**

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1.** To consider the attached report from the Standards Committee.

#### **Background**

- 2.** As a matter of good corporate governance the Standards Committee provides the Fire and Rescue Authority with an annual report on its activities during each financial year. For this purpose the Committee met on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2010 to agree its Annual Report for the financial year 2009/10.
- 3.** Consequently the Committee's sixth Annual Report, is attached for members' consideration.

#### **Recommendation**

- 4.** The Standards Committee recommends that the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority notes the report and endorses a proactive and extended role for the Committee.



## **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE OF NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

### **Background**

This is the Standards Committee's sixth annual report to the Fire and Rescue Authority and spans the period from April 2009 to March 2010. Legislation dictates that all Standards Committees are required to meet at least once per calendar year.

### **Membership**

This year saw the terms of office of two members come to an end. Chris Bretherton-Watt and John Pollard stood down in September. Following a decision at the Authority annual meeting it was decided to advertise for new members rather than giving members the opportunity to be re-appointed.

An advertisement for new independent members was placed in the Daily Post and posted on the Service's website. On 1<sup>st</sup> December, interviews were held at Rhyl Community Fire Station and two new members were appointed – Celia Blomeley and Jane A Eyton-Jones.

Therefore the new membership is as follows:

#### Independent members

Mr Simon Fysh  
Mr Samindre Soysa  
Celia Blomeley  
Jane A Eyton-Jones

#### Fire and Rescue Authority members

Councillor Glyn Williams  
Councillor Merfyn Thomas

### **Meeting held**

The Standards Committee met on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2010 and the following members attended:

Simon Fysh  
Celia Blomeley  
Jane A Eyton-Jones  
Cllr Merfyn Thomas

Apologies were received from Samindre Soysa.

## **Issues Discussed**

The following issues were discussed:

The first item on the agenda was nominating a new Chair and Vice-Chair for the Committee. Simon Fysh was appointed as Chair and Samindre Soysa as Vice-Chair.

The committee reviewed the role of the Standards Committee and it was agreed that at least three meetings per year would be held with the Committee taking on a more proactive role rather than being solely reactive.

The Ombudsman had recently published a first draft of a uniformed complaints policy to be used by all public services in Wales; on the advice of the Clerk members agreed that it would be useful to consider the draft policy at the next meeting and to review the Authority's policy. Members enquired about the whistle blowing policy of the Authority and Service and it was agreed that the operation of the policy should be a subject for review.

The Chair expressed his disappointment that the Authority had decided not to remunerate independent members. The Clerk explained the background and his advice to the Authority. The Authority could be asked to review its position and any case for an extended role for the committee could be presented to the Authority by the Clerk and Committee Chair. The Chair felt that if there was monetary consideration it would encourage people from all sections of the community to apply for the role of independent member.

## **Complaints against members of the Fire and Rescue Authority**

During the period of this report, no complaints have been made against councillors in respect of their role as members of the Fire and Rescue Authority. Accordingly, no matters have been referred to the Committee for investigation or decision.

Although Members agreed that the Authority is to be congratulated on not having received complaints about members and possible breaches of the code of conduct, they considered that it could not be assumed that this was because people were aware that they could complain.

Members acknowledged that should a complaint against a member be submitted to the Standards Committee, members would require specific, intense training before any hearing.

Members felt that the Authority should be having refresher training on the Code of Conduct on an annual basis and that information on training provided to date in constituent authorities was required.

## **Financial Implications**

The Standards Committee has not got its own budget but the costs incurred during 2009/10 were as follows:

Place advertisement in the Daily Post for independent members	£1337.00
Lunch for Authority members interviewing candidates	£27.00

Other costs incurred were travel costs to and from the meeting and time spent at meeting by Members and Officers.

## **Additional Information**

The Committee was informed that the Authority had agreed to establish an Audit Committee and members were fully supportive of this approach.

Members of the Committee were pleased to note that the Authority had been successful in its application for the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.

## **Conclusion**

The Standards Committee recommends that the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority notes this report and endorses a proactive and extended role for the Committee.