



AGENDA ITEM: 13

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

16th March 2009

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 2nd February 2009 to agree its Annual Report for the financial year 2008/09.
- 3.** Consequently the Committee's fifth Annual Report, which covers its activities between April 2008 and March 2009, is attached for members' consideration.

Recommendation

- 4.** That the Fire and Rescue Authority receive the Standards Committee's Annual Report.



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

Background

1. This is the Standards Committee's fifth annual report to the Fire and Rescue Authority and spans the period from April 2008 to March 2009.

Membership

2. The membership of the Committee is as follows:

Independent members

Mr Chris Bretherton-Watt (chair)
Mr John Pollard JP (vice chair)
Mr Simon Fysh
Mr Samindre Soysa

Fire and Rescue Authority members

Councillor Glyn Williams
Councillor Merfyn Thomas

Meetings held

3. Legislation dictates that all Standards Committees are required to meet at least once per calendar year. The Standards Committee met on 2nd February 2009. Throughout the year other business was transacted via correspondence, details of which are provided further on in this report.
4. Attendance was as follows:

Mr Chris Bretherton-Watt
Mr Simon Fysh
Councillor Glyn Williams
Councillor Merfyn Thomas

Issues Discussed

Remuneration Panel

5. At its meeting on the 15th February 2008, the Committee discussed the proposal to establish "The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales". The effects of this proposal on fire and rescue authorities, the implications for the Standards Committee and the possible introduction of an allowance for Co-Optees were considered.
6. The Remuneration Panel published its Initial Report in July 2008 along with a commitment to provide a Supplementary Report in which the maximum level of adjustment (uprating) would be prescribed for 2009/2010 and which would come into force from 1st April 2009.
7. This Supplementary Report was published in December 2008 and in determining the uprating, the Panel took into consideration a range of issues including the feedback and representations that it had received on the Initial Report.
8. The Panel will also commence a comprehensive consultation on members' allowances during the period February to June 2009. This will be the first opportunity (since the role of the modern and professional councillor was established by the Local Government Act 2000) for stakeholders to contribute to a comprehensive review of members' allowances.
9. A review of the Members' Allowances Scheme will be presented to the full Fire Authority meeting to be held on 16th March 2009. This review is consistent with the arrangements made by the constituent authorities. The Clerks of each of the three Fire Authorities in Wales have met and discussed how to deal with this in their respective authorities and make consistent recommendations to their respective authorities.

Training and Development

10. Following the local authority elections in May 2008 all local authorities provided training and development for both new and returning councillors. The training included the ethical framework and the code of conduct.

11. No additional training requirements on the ethical framework were identified for Standards Committee members or for members of the Fire and Rescue Authority during the current year. Nevertheless it has been noted that the introduction of the Revised Model Code of Conduct during 2008 will necessitate the provision of training for all members on the changes brought about by the revised Code by the constituent authorities/fire and rescue authorities.

Code of Conduct

12. A written report and a verbal update on the Code of Conduct was given by the Clerk.

Business transacted via correspondence

13. During 2007/08 committee members were informed, via correspondence, of the implementation of the 'Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007' and how it applied to standards committees under the consequential 'Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Decisions, Documents and Meetings) and the Standards Committees (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2007'. Members were notified about the publication and contents of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Report 2006/07. In addition, for information purposes, copies of occasional papers published by the Standards Board for England on 'Predisposition, Predetermination or Bias, and the Code' were circulated to the Committee.

Complaints against members of the Fire and Rescue Authority

14. 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.

Additional Information

15. The Clerk informed Members that an audit committee was to be introduced with effect from April 2009. The Committee was fully supportive of this approach.
16. Members were pleased to note and support that the Authority will be applying for the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.

Other activities undertaken by members of the Standards Committee

17. The following members attended the induction event at OpTic on 11th June and have therefore received a briefing on the ethical framework and the revised code of conduct following the local authority elections in 2008:

Chris Bretherton-Watt
Samindre Soysa
Simon Fysh

18. Simon Fysh and Chris Bretherton-Watt attended meetings of the Authority's Executive Panel on 28th July and 22nd September 2008 respectively.

Conclusion

19. The Standards Committee recommends that the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority note this report.