



AGENDA ITEM: 16

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

19th March 2007

THE COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

**Report by Ian Miller,
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 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 28th February 2007 to agree on its Annual Report for 2006/07.
3. Consequently the Committee's third Annual Report, which covers its activities between April 2006 and March 2007, is attached for members' consideration.

Recommendation

4. That the Fire and Rescue Authority receives the Standards Committee's Annual Report and notes its recommendation that training will be required on the revised code of conduct when that comes into force.



STANDARDS COMMITTEE OF NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

ANNUAL REPORT

1. This is the Standards Committee's third annual report to the Fire and Rescue Authority and spans the period from April 2006 to March 2007.

Membership

2. During 2006/07 there was a change in Committee membership. Following Councillor Sharon Frobisher's appointment to the Executive Panel, the Authority appointed Councillor Cliff Shone as its other representative on the Standards Committee.

The membership of the Committee was therefore as follows:

Independent members

Mr Chris Bretherton-Watt (chair)

Mr John Pollard JP (vice chair)

Mr Simon Fysh

Fire and Rescue Authority members

Councillor Gwilym O Williams

Councillor Sharon Frobisher (up until September 2006)

Councillor Cliff Shone (from October 2006)



Meetings held

3. The Committee strives to meet at least twice a year, usually about 6 months apart, or more often if business necessitates such meetings. During the year under review the Committee met on 2 occasions: 2nd October 2006 and 28th February 2007.
4. Attendance was as follows:

Mr Chris Bretherton-Watt	2/2
Mr John Pollard JP	1/2
Mr Simon Fysh	2/2
Councillor Sharon Frobisher	0/0
Councillor Gwilym O Williams	2/2
Councillor Cliff Shone	1/2
5. The additional cost of the Standards Committee's activities, including travel and subsistence, printing, postage etc., is estimated to have been just under £600 during the period covered by this report.

Issues discussed

6. The Committee has discussed the following matters:

Consultations and draft legislation:

7. A summary of the Committee's response to the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) consultation on the "Proposed Amendments to the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001", back in October 2005, was reported to the Authority in the Committee's last annual report in March 2006.



Consultations and draft legislation *(continued)*:

Consequently, in February 2006, a draft "Standards Committees (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006" Statutory Instrument (SI) was published for consultation. In its response to the consultation on the draft SI the Committee raised a number of points, ranging from matters relating to the drafting of the SI; the size of any sub-committees established by Standards Committees; issues pertaining to the quorum requirements of these sub-committees and the proposed limitations to the term of office of independent members who are re-appointed to serve a second term on Standards Committees. The resultant SI was published by the WAG on 11th July 2006 and, following approval by Plenary, came into force 3 days later.

Other business:

8. Two items of business, namely Legislation Update and the Committee's Expenditure have become standard items on the Committee's business agenda.

Committee Expenditure: this item deals with the Committee's expenditure during the financial year and provides members with a breakdown of the Committee's costs in the following areas - printing, postage, simultaneous translation, members' travel, subsistence and conference fees.

Legislation Update: the Committee has regularly been kept informed on the expected timetable for legislation on which it has been consulted.

From the Committee's perspective it was particularly pleasing to note that the WAG had resolved in its Draft Regulations on Members' Allowances, published towards the end of 2006, to recognise the contribution of independent members by empowering authorities to pay them a co-optee's allowance.



Other business *(continued)*:

Training requirements for members of the Committee and for Fire and Rescue Authority members: 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 2007 will necessitate the provision of training for all members on the changes brought about by the revised Code.

Discussions will be held with the constituent councils' monitoring officers to ascertain how they intend to deliver training to councillors on the Revised Code of Conduct - whether the intention is to hold training sessions per unitary authority area, or jointly with another authority or authorities - and to ensure that the training provided will cover the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Authority. Permission will also be sought for independent members of the Fire and Rescue Authority's Standards Committee to attend any of these events for the purpose of their own training on the Revised Code.

Minutes: minutes of Standards Committee meetings are circulated to all Fire and Rescue Authority members for information.

Complaints against members of the fire and rescue authority

9. 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. The committee hopes that this pleasing situation will continue.



Other activities undertaken by members of the Standards Committee

- 10. All Wales Standards Committees Conference:** two Standards Committee members attended the Conference, held at Aberaeron, on 22nd September 2006. This Conference, which has become an annual event, has proved itself to be an extremely useful forum for the sharing of information and best practice.

At the Conference Standards Committee members have the opportunity to hear, and ask questions of, distinguished speakers such as The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Chairman of the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

As a result of feedback from this year's Conference, and from other stakeholders, the WAG has undertaken to introduce the Revised Model Code of Conduct from 2007 rather than delaying its implementation until after the local authority elections in 2008.

- 11.** Regrettably, due to other commitments, independent members of the Standards Committee have not been in a position to attend, as observers, any Fire and Rescue Authority or Executive Panel meetings during the past twelve months.

Conclusion

- 12.** The Standards Committee recommends that the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority note this report and the training that will be required on the revised code of conduct.

March 2007