



AGENDA ITEM: 16

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

18th June 2007

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

**Report by Ian Miller,
Clerk to the Authority**

Purpose of Report

- 1.** To seek approval of an amendment to the Standing Orders in relation to the date of the autumn business meeting in order to accommodate the requirements of the Risk Reduction Planning (RRP) process and a consequential delegation of power in relation to the approval of the Authority's annual Statement of Accounts to the Executive Panel.

Background

- 2.** Standing Order 4(2) of the Fire and Rescue Authority's Standing Orders states that "meetings of the authority shall take place in the months of June,..., and in September, December and March respectively. These meetings shall take place on the third Monday of the month unless determined by the Chair in consultation with the Clerk and Chief Fire Officer."



Background *(continued)*

3. On 21st March 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) published its Guidance to fire and rescue authorities on Risk Reduction Planning - "Wales a Safer Country". The Guidance explicitly states that "Fire and Rescue Authorities will need to develop, consult, approve and publish their RRP and annual action plans by 31st October" every year. The Guidance also states that fire and rescue authorities must "consult widely and allow a minimum of 12 weeks for the consultation process".

Information

4. The requirements of the RRP process, as set out in the Guidance, would make it impossible for the Authority to be in a position to approve its RRP and action plan at its meeting on the third Monday in September of any year, unless the draft RRP was approved for consultation at the March meeting – this seems rather premature when the plan would not take effect until the following year. Rather than hold an additional meeting of the Authority during October solely for the purpose of approving the RRP for the following year, it would be simpler if the Authority resolved to change the day of its second business meeting in each municipal year to be the third Monday in October – this approach was used by the Authority in 2006.
5. As the approval of the RRP will, for the foreseeable future, become the primary item of business on the Authority's autumn meeting's agenda it would therefore be advisable for the Authority to amend its Standing Orders so that its autumn meeting is held in October rather than in September.



Information *(continued)*

6. By adopting this approach and refraining from holding two separate meetings on consecutive months the Authority would be utilising its resources in an efficient manner. Re-scheduling the meeting to the third Monday in October would also give the Authority sufficient time to incorporate any amendments it resolves to make to the RRP into the Plan prior to its publication by the statutory deadline.

Additional Information

7. The amendment was formally moved at the meeting on 19th March 2007 and, in accordance with standing order 2(2), stands adjourned until today's meeting.
8. Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations (Wales) 2005 the deadline for certifying public authorities' annual accounts, for the financial year 2006/07, onwards is being brought forward from 31st October to 30th September in the following financial year. In the past North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has approved its audited accounts and formally acknowledged the Letter of Representation sent to the external auditor at its September business meeting.
9. If the recommended amendment to Standing Orders is approved it will necessitate an additional meeting of the Authority to be convened during September of every year solely for the above purpose. As mentioned in paragraph 6 above this would equate to an inefficient use of resources.



Additional Information *(continued)*

- 10.** Members will already have been privy to the draft Statement of Accounts, and would have had an opportunity to raise any questions in relation to them, at the Authority's June business meeting. It would therefore be advisable, bearing in mind the recent expansion of the Executive Panel's terms of reference to encompass certain audit matters, for the Authority to delegate its powers in relation to the approval of the annual Statement of Accounts to the Panel. The Treasurer's advice was sought in connection with this proposal and he is content with such an arrangement being put in place.

Recommendation

- 11.** That:

- 11.1** the following amendment to Standing Order 4(2) be approved:

"4(2) Meetings of the authority shall take place in the months of June, which shall be the Authority's Annual Meeting, and October, December and March. These meetings shall take place on the third Monday of the month unless determined by the Chair in consultation with the Clerk and Chief Fire Officer"; and

- 11.2** if the recommendation in 11.1 is approved consequentially the Executive Panel's powers be extended to include the following delegation:

"2.6 In addition the Executive Panel shall, for each financial year in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations (Wales) 2005, approve the Authority's Annual Statement of Accounts and formally acknowledge the Letter of Representation sent to the External Auditor."

