



## **AGENDA ITEM: 21**

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

**19<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

#### **AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS**

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

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 To recommend immediate maintenance amendments to the Authority's Standing Orders and a proposal to conduct a full review of the Standing Orders at the AGM in June.

#### **Background**

2. The Welsh Government recently consulted on changing by Order the date by which Fire and Rescue Authorities must publish their Improvement Plans from "as soon as reasonably practicable after 30 September" to "as soon as reasonably practicable after 31 December" of the year prior to the financial year to which the plan relates.
3. Statutory guidance issued in May 2010 interpreted "as soon as reasonably practicable after 30 September" to be by 31 October – the date by which FRAs have been publishing their Improvement/Risk Reduction Plans since 2006.
4. Although confirmation has not yet been received, it is understood that:
  - a. the Order introducing the new publication deadline date will come into force during May 2012 and that the change will have effect for FRA improvement plans for the financial year 2013-14;

- b. during 2012 the Welsh Government will issue new statutory improvement planning guidance to FRAs which will interpret the "as soon as possible after 31 December" date as being by the end of March.

## **Information**

- 5. The Authority's autumn meeting was originally moved from September to October in 2006 in order to accommodate a requirement for the Authority to approve a final draft of its Improvement Plan prior to its publication by 31st October.
- 6. The introduction of a new 31st March deadline will mean that this rationale for holding an October meeting rather than a September meeting no longer exists. The March deadline will be reverting to the original deadline by which Fire Authorities had to publish Best Value Performance Plans between 1999 and 2001.
- 7. In order to change the meeting dates, the Standing Orders need to be amended as they limit meetings of the authority to take place in the specific months of June, October, December and March.
- 8. It is advisable to have flexibility around the dates of full meetings; it is therefore proposed to amend Standing Order 4 (2) to read:

Meetings of the authority shall take place a minimum of four times per year and the annual meeting shall take place no later than June. These meetings shall normally take place on the third Monday of the month unless determined by the Chair in consultation with the Clerk and Chief Fire Officer.

- 9. Now that the Audit Committee has been established it is proposed to add the following under Standing Order 12.

(2) (a) There shall be an Audit Committee consisting of 14 voting members who are not on the Executive Panel.

(b) The terms of reference of, and functions to be discharged by, the Committee shall be as resolved by the Authority from time to time.

(c) These standing orders shall apply to the Audit Committee as if it were a committee of the Authority except for standing orders 14(2) and 17.

(d) The Audit Committee will appoint the Chair and Vice-Chair and this will be ratified at the following Authority meeting.

10 It is also proposed that the Standing Orders be amended to reflect the new title of the vice-chair to deputy chair as specified in the Independent Remuneration Panel's report.

### **Recommendation**

11 Members are asked to:

- (i) approve the amendments to the Authority's Standing Orders as outlined above in paragraphs 8, 9 and 10;
- (ii) note that the Standing Orders will be fully reviewed in time for the Annual Meeting in June.