



## **AGENDA ITEM: 11**

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

**17<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

#### **THE STANDARDS 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 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008 to agree on its Annual Report for 2007/08.
- 3.** Consequently the Committee's fourth Annual Report, which covers its activities between April 2007 and March 2008, is attached for members' consideration.

##### **Recommendation**

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



## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE OF NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

### **ANNUAL REPORT**

- 1.** This is the Standards Committee's fourth annual report to the Fire and Rescue Authority and spans the period from April 2007 to March 2008.

#### **Membership**

- 2.** At its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2007 the Fire and Rescue Authority agreed to the Committee's request that an additional independent member be appointed to serve on the Standards Committee. The Committee was of the view that increasing the number of independent members that sit on the Committee, from 3 to 4, would assist it in securing a quorum for meetings. Unfortunately, as no provision had been made in the 2007/08 Committee Services budget for the recruitment process, the Authority was unable to proceed with recruiting the additional independent member until recently. Also during 2007 the term of office of one of the independent members, Mr Simon Fysh, expired. However, following a change in legislation which now permits independent members to be reappointed for a second term without the need for the vacancy to be advertised, the Authority approved Mr Fysh's re-appointment for a further term of 4 years. His appointment runs until 28<sup>th</sup> September 2011.



### **Membership** *(continued)*

- 3.** 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 Cliff Shone

### **Meetings held**

- 4.** Legislation dictates that all Standards Committees are required to meet at least once per calendar year. In recent years North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's Standards Committee has strived to meet at least twice each financial year, about 6 months apart, or more often if business necessitated such meetings. However the Committee only held one meeting during the 2007/08 financial year, on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008. Due to the delay encountered with the Welsh Assembly Government's introduction of the revised Model Code of Conduct, and as the Committee had no other business to transact which necessitated a meeting to be called, a decision was taken not to hold the customary meeting during the autumn of 2007. Throughout the year other business was transacted via correspondence, details of which are provided further on in this report.



## **Meetings held** *(continued)*

**5.** Attendance was as follows:

Mr Chris Bretherton-Watt	(1/1)
Mr John Pollard JP	(1/1)
Mr Simon Fysh	(1/1)
Councillor Gwilym O Williams	(1/1)
Councillor Cliff Shone	(1/1)

- 6.** The additional cost of the Standards Committee's activities, including travel and subsistence, printing, postage etc., is estimated to have been under £250 during the period covered by this report.

## **Issues discussed**

- 7.** At its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008, in addition to the standard business items of 'Legislation Update' and the Committee's Expenditure, information about the establishment of 'The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales', how it affects fire and rescue authorities and its implications for standards committees was presented to Committee members. Consideration was also given to the 'Standards Committee's Annual Report to the Fire and Rescue Authority'. Members discussed the provisional arrangements in place for training and developing new and returning Fire and Rescue Authority members following the local authority elections in May 2008.



### **Issues discussed** (*continued*)

- 8.** 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, as reported last year, 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. It is anticipated that the revised Code will be introduced to coincide with the inception of the new Authority and therefore training on the ethical framework will be provided to all members as part of their induction programme. Discussions will also be held with the constituent councils to ensure that the training they provide will cover the Fire and Rescue Authority's requirements as appropriate.

### **Business transacted via correspondence**

- 9.** 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.
- 10.** As in previous years 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**

- 11.** 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**

- 12.** Mr Simon Fysh attended a meeting of the Authority's Executive Panel on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2008 as an observer.

## **Conclusion**

- 13.** The Standards Committee recommends that the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority note this report and the training that will be required on the ethical framework and the revised code of conduct following the local authority elections in 2008.