

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

(Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority)

17 September 2008

### Present:-

Messrs. Watson (Chairman), D. Phillips and Withers (Independent Members)

Councillors S. Hughes, Mrs. Nicholson, Parker and Yeomans

### Apologies:-

Councillors M. Phillips and Way

### **\*SC/7. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2008 be signed as a correct record.

### **\*SC/8. Declarations of Interest**

Members were invited to consider whether they had any **personal/personal and prejudicial interests** in items as set out on the agenda for the meeting and to declare any such interests at this time.

No interests were declared.

### **\*SC/9. Local Assessment Regime - Implementation Issues**

The Committee considered a report of the Clerk To The Authority (SC/08/2) on issues connected with implementation of the new local assessment regime and covering, specifically:-

- the latest issue of the Standards Board for England (SBE) bulletin (No. 40) which contained, amongst other things, a request for views on adjourning local assessment decisions;
- the issue by SBE of its final piece of guidance – “Standards Committee Determinations” – on the new local assessment framework and the availability of other guidance on the SBE website;
- progress to date in exploring options for the delivery of appropriate support for both the Committee and relevant officers in the operation of the new regime.

In relation to the latter point, the Clerk reported that all South West combined fire and rescue authorities and police authorities had been invited to express interest in collaborating to secure appropriate support. To date, two authorities (Wiltshire and Avon) had indicated that they might wish to explore this. Members on the Committee suggested that the invitation might also be extended to National Park Authorities. The Clerk indicated that it was hoped to conduct a proportionate procurement exercise for this support by the end of the current calendar with a view to having the provision in place for delivery early in the new year.

## **RESOLVED**

- (a) that the Clerk be authorised to respond on behalf of the Committee notifying the Standards Board for England be informed of the support of this Committee for its proposed alternative solution in place of adjourning local assessment decisions, subject to the following caveats:-
  - (i) that, prior to issuing any definitive guidance, the SBE should seek legal opinion to clarify that Section 16 of the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 would facilitate the proposed solution; and
  - (ii) a requirement for any final guidance issued to stipulate that – in forwarding a case for investigation but indicating that some other form of action might be appropriate to resolve the matter – an assessment committee must clearly define the “other action” to be undertaken and specifies that – in terms of compliance – this is non-negotiable.
- (b) that the National Parks be invited to express interest in participating in a collaborative venture to secure appropriate support for the new local assessment regime;
- (c) that, subject to (a) and (b) above, the report be noted.

**\* DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The meeting started at 10.00hours and finished at 10.55hours