

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

(Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority)

12 August 2009

Present:-

Councillors Gribble, Horsfall, Manning, Phillips, Randall Johnson, Withers and Yeomans.

Apologies:-

Councillors Mills and Mr Watson.

***SC/1. Election of Chairman**

RESOLVED that Mr David Watson be appointed Chairman of the Committee until its first meeting after the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2010.

***SC/2. Election of Vice-Chairman**

In view of the absence of Mr Watson, it was agreed to move item 5 for consideration at this point in the meeting, whereupon it was

RESOLVED that Mr Derek Phillips be appointed Vice Chairman of the Committee until its first meeting after the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2010.

In the absence of Mr Watson, it was:

RESOLVED that Mr Phillips would take the Chair for this meeting.

***SC/3. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2008 be approved and signed by the Chairman, subject to an amendment under Minute *SC/9 to take out the words "be informed" on the second line of resolution (a).

***SC/4. Declarations of Interest**

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

No interests were declared.

***SC/5. Appointments to Sub-Committees**

The Committee considered a report of the Clerk to the Authority (and Monitoring Officer) (SC/09/1) that set out a process for the determination of allegations of breaches of the Members' Model Code of Conduct, which involved the establishment of a number of sub-committees with associated Terms of Reference. The Committee was invited to endorse that process and to appoint Members to each of the sub-committees.

Concern was expressed in respect of the availability of Members to participate in this process within the timescales set. The Clerk confirmed that, in accordance with Standing Order 43.(5) and 43.(6), it was possible for substitutes to be nominated to attend the meetings providing this did not create a conflict of interest between membership of the Assessment and Review Sub-Committees.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the size and Terms of Reference for the Assessment, Review, Monitoring Officers Reports and Hearings Sub-Committees, as set out in Section 2 of report SC/08/1 be confirmed;
- (b) that, at this stage, the following appointments be made to the Assessment and Review Sub-Committees in accordance with regulatory requirements, the term of office to be until the first meeting of the Standards Committee following the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2009;

Assessment Sub-Committee	Review Sub-Committee
Mr Derek Phillips	Mr Robin Withers
Councillor Terry Manning	Councillor Alvin Horsfall
Councillor Derek Yeomans	Councillor George Gribble

- (c) that the contents of Authority Standing Order 43 in relation to the appointment to and operation of Sub-Committees of the Standards Committee (including the provision for substitutions), as set out in Section 3 of report SC/08/1 (appended to this report) be noted; and
- (d) that the Committee endorses the previously agreed operating protocol of meetings of the Assessment and Review Sub-Committees being called by the Clerk as and when business requires – acknowledging the Standards Board for England guidance that such matters should be addressed within an average of 20 working days of receipt.

***SC/6. 2009 Annual Assembly of Standards Committees**

The Committee received for information details in respect of the 2009 Annual Assembly of Standards Committees which was to take place on Monday and Tuesday, 12 and 13 October 2009 at the International Conference Centre, Birmingham. The Authority’s Approved Scheme of Allowances provided for three, fully funded, Member (including Independent Member) places to attend this event. Two places had already been allocated to date to Councillors Gribble and Mills and the Committee was invited to consider and nominate a third Member to attend this event. Additionally, two of the Committee’s Independent Members (David Watson and Robin Withers) were also both attending the Assembly but their attendance was being funded by other bodies.

It was noted at this point that Councillor Gribble was unable to attend the Conference and that a further delegate needed to be nominated to replace him. It was suggested, in view of this, that the third place should be rescinded and that Councillor Manning would attend in place of Councillor Gribble.

RESOLVED that Councillors Manning and Mills attend the 2009 Annual Assembly of Standards Committees, accompanied by the Clerk and Democratic Services and Corporate Support Manager.

***SC/7. The Role of the Standards Committee within the Authority**

The Committee considered a report of the Clerk to the Authority (SC/09/2) that explored options for developing the remit of the Standards Committee to enhance its role in embedding appropriate ethical standards at the heart of the Authority's business.

Reference was made to the suggestions set in the report for inclusion within the Terms of Reference as follows:

- Member/Officer protocol;
- Policy on Gifts and Hospitality;
- Issues referred to the Ombudsman.

Members of the Committee commented that, whilst these were areas which the Committee could include within its Terms of Reference, there was a need to ensure that any duplication with the remit of the Authority's Audit and Performance Review Committee was avoided. The Clerk advised that the issue of the role of Standards Committees was to be a topic for discussion at the 2009 Annual Assembly and he suggested that further consideration of this matter be deferred pending the outcome of the Conference.

Mr. Withers suggested that consideration could be given to the inclusion of the Authority's Partnership Framework and the Register of Interests in addition to the areas above.

NB. Minute *SC/6. above also refers.

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

The meeting started at 14.15hours and finished at 15.20hours.