

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

(Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority)

3 March 2010

Present:-

Messrs. Watson (Chairman) and Phillips (Independent Members).

Councillors Gribble, Horsfall, Manning, Mills, Phillips, Randall Johnson and Yeomans

Apologies:-

Mr R Withers (Independent Member).

***SC/8. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 August 2009 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

***SC/9. 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 this meeting and to declare any such interests.

No interests were declared.

***SC/10. Standards Committee Remit - Further Considerations**

The Committee considered a report of the Clerk to the Authority (SC/10/1) that provided further information in respect of potential areas for enhancement of the role of the Standards Committee. The report also outlined proposals to undertake an ethical governance self-assessment, together with information surrounding the implications of the changes to the rules on political restriction introduced by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Committee considered the options outlined in respect of potential areas of expansion and/or enhancement of the role of the Standards Committee. There was a consensus of opinion that there should not be anything added to the Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee and consequently, no recommendation would be made to the Fire and Rescue Authority in this respect.

The Clerk referred at this point to discussions that had been held recently with the Clerk to the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire and Rescue Authority in respect of proposals for a joint training session for the Assessment of complaints. This would be carried out in-house at Wiltshire and Swindon Fire and Rescue Service in late June and would be at no cost to this Authority. It was noted that further details would be provided in due course.

Reference was made to the ethical standards self-assessment. This was supported by the Committee although Councillor Yeomans urged officers to carry out evaluations of any member events as soon as possible after it had been held so that responses were accurate. The Clerk indicated that a report would be submitted to the Committee outlining the responses received.

The Clerk outlined the implications for the Authority of the changes to the rules in respect of political restriction introduced by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Councillor Randall Johnson moved (and Councillor Yeomans seconded) that:

“subject to their being no changes to the Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee, the recommendations set out within report SC/10/1 be approved and the position noted”.

RESOLVED

- (a) that no recommendations be made to the Authority in relation to expanding or enhancing the role of this Committee;
- (b) that the ethical governance self-assessment audit, along the lines suggested in Section 2 of this report, be undertaken;
- (c) that, in relation to the revisions to political restrictions as outlined in Section 3 of this report, the Committee:
 - (i) authorises the Clerk to instigate a review of those posts that should initially be registered on the required list of politically restricted posts;
 - (ii) approves the division of responsibility with the Chief Fire Officer determining, in the first instance, the inclusion of posts on the maintained list and the Standards Committee considering requests for exemption in accordance with its current terms of reference;
- (d) that, subject to (a) to (d) above, the report be received and noted.

***SC/11. Standards for England Draft Annual Return 2010**

The Committee received for information details of the Standards Board for England Annual Return for 2010 which had been received recently, together with guidance notes on its completion.

The Clerk advised that he would complete the return and submit the final version to the Committee in due course.

***SC/12. "Assessment Made Clear - Local Assessment of Complaints" - Standards for England Training DVD**

The Committee viewed a DVD that had been produced by the Standards Board for England as a tool to provide training in respect of the processes involved in the local assessment of complaints.

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

The meeting started at 14.15hours and finished at 15.40hours