

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	DSFRA/16/10
MEETING	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY (ANNUAL MEETING)
DATE OF MEETING	26 MAY 2016
SUBJECT OF REPORT	REVIEW OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS
LEAD OFFICER	Clerk to the Authority
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p><i>(a). that the Authority considers, with a view to approving, the proposed change to attendance at the Local Government Association Annual Fire Conference (as provided for in the Scheme of Members' Allowances) to provide for attendance by up to four Members – the Authority Chair and Vice-Chair with up to two additional development places;</i></p> <p><i>(b). that, subject to (a) above, the constitutional governance framework documents as identified at paragraph 1.1 of this report be endorsed.</i></p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This report sets out information on the most recent review of the Authority's constitutional governance framework documents (Standing Orders, Financial Regulations etc.), which, while not a statutory requirement, is undertaken at least annually as a matter of good practice.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Nil.
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS (ERBA)	The contents of this report are considered compatible with existing human rights and equalities legislation.
APPENDICES	Nil.
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	Nil.

1. **BACKGROUND**

1.1 At its inaugural meeting on 11 April 2007 the Authority approved a number of “in-principle” decisions previously approved by the Shadow Authority, including its Constitutional Governance Framework documents (Minute DSFRA/5 refers). These documents now include, amongst other things:-

- The Accountabilities, Roles and Responsibilities of Members of the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority
- Members’ Code of Conduct;
- Member/Officer Protocol;
- Policy on Gifts and Hospitality;
- Scheme of Members Allowances;
- Standing Orders;
- Financial Regulations;
- Contract Standing Orders;
- Scheme of Delegations;
- Corporate Governance Code;
- Treasury Management Policy;
- Strategy on the Prevention and Detection of Fraud and Corruption; and
- “Whistleblowing” Code (Confidential Reporting Policy).

1.2 The Authority Constitutional Governance Framework documents may be viewed on the Authority’s website by following the link below.

www.dsfire.gov.uk/FireAuthority/ConstitutionalGovernance

The constitutional operation of the Authority also features a Committee structure (with associated terms of reference). This is addressed by a report elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.

1.3 The documents referred to above were drafted by reference to a number of sources, some statutory; some based upon “models” issued either by central government or by professional bodies (e.g. the Chartered Institute for Public Finance Accountancy – CIPFA); and others based on “best practice” documents in use by other local authorities (including combined fire and rescue authorities). While there is no legal requirement for the documents to be reviewed, they are nonetheless reviewed at least annually to ensure that they continue to be “fit for purpose”. This clearly does not preclude making revisions at any time to any of the documents where this might be required by changes in legislation or internal structure; or the approval of new documents to enhance the governance framework.

1.4 In practice the documents tend to be “dynamic” and are amended as and when the need arises, as reflected by revisions to the Financial Regulations in February of this year to reflect changes in the governance structure for commercial activity.

2. OUTCOME OF MOST RECENT REVIEW

- 2.1 Each of the Authority's Constitutional Framework documents have again been subject to review over the last twelve months and will continue to be subject to ongoing review with any further proposed revisions submitted to future meetings of the Authority as required. Other than the amendments already approved (to reflect changes in commercial governance arrangements), the only change proposed is to the Scheme of Members' Allowances in so far as conference attendance is concerned. Details of this are set out below.

Scheme of Members' Allowances – Conference Attendance

- 2.2 The approved Scheme of Members' Allowances currently provides for the Local Government Association Annual Fire Conference (normally held in April/March of each year) to be attended by four Members – the Authority Chair and Vice-Chair and two other Members (preferably from constituent authorities not represented).
- 2.3 The Authority is invited to consider amending this representation to provide for attendance by up to four Members – the Chairman and Vice-Chairman with up to two other places allocated as developmental places.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Service has a commitment to continuous improvement to achieve and sustain its stated ambition of being an "excellent" organisation. As part of this, the Authority's constitutional governance framework documents will continue to be subject to ongoing review with any further proposals for amendments being submitted as and when required.

MIKE PEARSON
Clerk to the Authority