



AGENDA ITEM: 16

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

18th March 2013

THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Report by Colin Everett, Clerk to the Authority

Purpose of Report

- 1 Members are asked to note and approve the attached report from the Standards Committee.

Background

- 2 As a matter of good corporate governance the Standards Committee provides the Fire and Rescue Authority with an annual report on its activities during each financial year.
- 3 Consequently the Committee's ninth annual report is attached for Members' consideration.

Recommendation

- 4 Members are asked to note the Standards Committee's Annual Report.



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE OF NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Background

This is the Standards Committee's ninth annual report to the Fire and Rescue Authority and spans the period from April 2012 to March 2013. Legislation requires that Standards Committees meet at least annually.

The Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee provide a remit to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of the Authority and to oversee the whistle-blowing policy for complaints against members of the Authority. Also, where statute permits, to receive reports and complaints about members and to conduct or oversee investigations and to make recommendations to the authority.

Membership

Following the local authority elections in 2012, there was a change to the councillors' representation on the Standards Committee. Merfyn Thomas and Glyn Williams were the representatives up until May 2012, and at the Authority's annual meeting on 18th June 2012, Councillors Brian Dunn and Jim G Evans were appointed.

Therefore, the current membership is as follows:

Independent members

Celia Blomeley 01/01/2010 - 31/12/13

Jane A Eyton-Jones 01/01/2010 - 31/12/13

David Morris 01/09/10 - 31/08/14

Antony P Young 01/04/12 - 30/03/16

Fire and Rescue Authority members

Councillor Brian Dunn (18th June 2012 onwards)

Councillor Jim G Evans (18th June 2012 onwards)

Attendance and Issues

The Standards Committee met on 22nd May 2012 and the following members attended:

Celia Blomeley

Jane A Eyton-Jones

David Morris

Antony P Young

At that meeting, Jane A Eyton-Jones was appointed Chair and David Morris was appointed Deputy Chair of the Committee. Members discussed the Ombudsman's model complaints policy, code of conduct and indemnity insurance. It was noted that the FRA does not have an indemnity policy and it was acknowledged that it would be the FRA's decision whether or not an indemnity policy should be established.

Independent members were invited to attend the induction for new and returning members of the Authority and Celia Blomeley, David Morris and Antony Young were in attendance.

On 5th July 2012, a training session was held for all members of the Standards Committee. Gareth Owens led the training session which included an assimilation of a conduct case based on a members' behaviour (as the most common and complex source of complaint elsewhere) and the procedure to be followed in order to enable members to feel prepared and confident should a case arise.

In March 2011, the Authority had resolved to have an independent member from the Standards Committee to be a member of a panel that dealt with complaints that reached the stage 3 procedure of the NWFRA complaints policy. One complaint had been referred to the panel and Jane A Eyton-Jones had been a member of the panel together with Cllr A M Jones and Cllr M LI Davies.

Complaints against members of the Fire and Rescue Authority

During the period of this report, no complaints have been made against councillors in roles as members of the Fire and Rescue Authority. Accordingly, no matters have been referred to the Committee for investigation or decision.

Financial Implications

The budget for the Standards Committee is part of the committee services heading which covers all Authority costs. Following the approval of the members' remuneration scheme on 18th June 2012, independent members are now entitled to claim remuneration based on meetings and events attended. To date, no such claims have been made. Travel allowances amounting to £104.75 have been paid to independent members.

Conclusion

The Standards Committee recommends that the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority notes its report.