

# Merger of Standards and Human Resources Committees

## Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact John Redmond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260203 or Sharon Lloyd, Corporate Support Manager, on 01743 260210.

### 1 Purpose of Report

This report asks Members to consider the feasibility of merging the Standards Committee with the Human Resources Committee. A similar report will be taken to the October meeting of that Committee to seek its Members' views. Recommendations from both Committees will then be taken forward to the December meeting of the Fire Authority for consideration.

### 2 Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the feasibility of merging the Standards Committee with the Human Resources Committee and make recommendations accordingly to the Fire Authority.

### 3 Background

The Localism Act 2010 removed the requirement for local authorities to maintain a Standards Committee. There is still, however, the duty for local authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by their Members (section 27 of the Act). They must also have in place arrangements, under which allegations regarding failure to comply with the authority's code of conduct can be investigated and decisions on allegations can be made (section 28 of the Act).

## 4 Merger of Committees

Your officers are continuously looking at ways to streamline Fire Authority business in order to work more efficiently, reduce costs and lighten the burden, placed upon Members. As Members will appreciate, this is particularly important in the current economic climate.

To this end, Members are asked to consider the feasibility of merging the Standards and Human Resources Committees. Both Committees are concerned with 'people' issues and have some commonality in the following areas:

- Hearing of employee discipline appeals (Human Resources);
- Considering Code of Conduct complaints, investigations and sanctions against Members (Standards);
- Reviewing the Member Code of Conduct (Standards)
- Reviewing the Protocols on Gifts and Hospitality and Member / Officer Relations (Standards)

Before writing this report your officers did consider the possibility of merging the functions of the Standards and Audit and Performance Management Committees (as has happened at Shropshire Council). The latter Committee has responsibilities relating, inter alia, to anti-fraud, bribery, corruption and whistle blowing, which links to the Standards function. It was felt, however, that the remit and workload of this Committee are already substantial, in contrast to those of the Human Resources Committee, which are relatively light. Hence the former meets four times per year and the latter only twice.

Attached as an appendix to this report is the constitution of the Human Resources Committee. Should both Committees, and in turn the Fire Authority, agree to a merger, it is proposed that the terms of reference of both Committees be consolidated and that there be seven Members. It is also proposed that the Human Resources panel, which currently deals with appeals hearings, would consider Code of Conduct complaints, investigations and sanctions against Members and that it be renamed the Hearings Panel. The Committee itself would then be known as the Standards and Human Resources Committee.

## 5 Financial Implications

Should the merger between the Standards and Human Resources Committee take place, there would be small savings in:

- Members' travel allowances and total time spent on travelling;
- Postage, paper and photocopying costs; and
- Staff time.

## **6 Legal Comment**

As referred to in section 3 of this report, Chapter 7, Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 sets out the ethical framework for Fire Authority Members. The requirement for a Standards Committee is not mandatory but is practical in providing a formal arena for discussion of standards issues and ensures Member involvement in setting the nature and profile of the local standards regime.

It is possible to merge the responsibilities of both the Human Resources Committee and Standards Committee to form one committee to discharge its functions. This would require approval from the full Fire Authority and would result in a change to standing orders.

Membership would need to be confirmed and training would be provided for any Members new to either of the two respective areas in order to ensure effective decision making.

## **7 Initial Impact Assessment**

An Initial Impact Assessment has been completed.

## **8 Appendix**

Human Resources Committee Constitution

## **9 Background Papers**

There are no background papers associated with this report.

## **Human Resources Committee**

**Quorum - 4**

**Members - 7**

### **Meeting Dates**

**2013**

21 March

17 October

All meetings take place at 2.00 pm at Service Headquarters, unless otherwise advised.

### **Terms of Reference**

To consider human resource strategies and make recommendations to the Authority

To consider reports on the progress of regional and national human resource activities and make recommendations to the Authority, where appropriate

To consider and monitor staffing requirements, the establishment scheme and human resource policies for the Authority and make recommendations to the Authority

To consider fundamental amendments to locally determined conditions of service and make recommendations to the Authority

To consider reports regarding the induction, training and development needs of Members and officers, regularly review those needs and make recommendations to the Authority

To review at least annually, and more frequently, if changes are required sooner, its terms of reference to ensure that they are up-to-date, and make recommendations for change to the Fire Authority

To review and agree the role descriptions of the Committee's Chair and Vice-Chair

To ensure that equality of opportunity and diversity at work issues are promoted, implemented and monitored by the Authority and the Service

To consider reports on employee pension schemes and make recommendations to the Authority

To receive reports on Occupational Health provision and make recommendations to the Fire Authority, where appropriate

To review and amend, where required, the processes and procedures for dealing with:

- Appeals against grading and market factor supplement decisions (including rank to role)
- Grievances
- Appeals against the application or interpretation of conditions of service
- Appeals against dispute in accordance with the Collective Disputes Procedure
- Appeals Hearings cases

To ensure the provision of appropriate training and development to all Members of the Committee to enable them to discharge their responsibilities

## **Appeals Hearings**

### **Quorum – 3**

### **Members – 7**

Although all Members of the Human Resources Committee will be eligible to participate in appeals hearings, the number participating in any hearing will be limited to 3. Steps will be taken to ensure that wherever practicable political balance is achieved.

## **Terms of Reference**

To undertake the following functions which apply to those employees who come within the jurisdiction of the Fire Authority:

- To consider and determine appeals against grading and market factor supplement decisions (including rank to role)
- To consider and determine grievances in accordance with the Grievance Procedure
- To consider and determine appeals against the application or interpretation of conditions of service
- To consider and determine any appeal against a decision of a Brigade Manager / Brigade Managers relating to individual cases of long-term sickness and pay
- To consider and determine any appeal against a decision of a Brigade Manager / Brigade Managers relating to the ill-health retirement or dismissal for health-related reasons of any employee

- To consider and determine any appeal against a decision of a Brigade Manager / Brigade Managers relating to powers exercised under firemen's and firefighter pension scheme legislation and related legislation in respect of ill-health retirements, except where that appeal is against a medical decision
- To consider and determine appeals at Internal Dispute Resolution Procedures Stage 2 with regard to the firemen's and firefighter pension schemes and the Firefighters' Compensation Scheme
- To consider and determine appeals against dismissal under the disciplinary process
- To consider and determine appeals against dispute in accordance with the Collective Disputes Procedure