

Streamlining of Fire Authority Committees

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Paul Raymond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Sharon Lloyd, Corporate Services Manager, on 01743 260210.

1 Purpose of Report

This report proposes various changes to the Fire Authority's committee structure in order to make it more efficient.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to consider and decide whether to:

- a) Merge the Appeals Committee with the Human Resources Committee;
- b) Dissolve the Urgency Committee; and
- c) Dissolve the Budget Working Group.

3 Background

In the current economic climate it is incumbent upon officers to consider how the Service and Fire Authority can perform their functions more efficiently and work is currently taking place in a number of areas to achieve this. As part of this process officers have reviewed the Fire Authority's committee structure and propose a number changes, which will lead to a more streamlined approach and a better use of Members' time.

The current and proposed committee structures are shown at Appendices A and B respectively.

4 Strategy and Resources and Audit and Performance Management Committees

These Committees have distinct functions and Members of one are precluded from sitting on the other. The terms of reference of each have evolved over time to reflect legislative, audit and Fire Authority demands and your officers believe, therefore, that they are fit for purpose. In light of this no significant changes to their constitution are proposed. As with all of the committees any minor changes in the terms of reference will be brought to the July Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority for consideration.

5 Human Resources and Appeals Committee

At its meeting earlier in April the Human Resources Committee agreed to recommend to the Fire Authority that officers, rather than the Committee, deal with applications for outside employment. This matter will have been considered by Members under item 8 on the agenda relating to the minutes of the Human Resources Committee. Such delegation to officers would free up the time of the Committee to deal with the more significant matters outlined below.

In addition to the Human Resources Committee the Fire Authority has an Appeals Committee (also consisting of 7 Members, 5 of whom currently sit on both), which considers appeals relating to sickness and pay, ill-health retirement or dismissal, and powers exercised under the various pension schemes. As these matters are people related, they could quite feasibly fall under the auspices of the Human Resources Committee, obviating the need for a separate Appeals Committee.

Recommendation: that the Appeals Committee is merged with the Human Resources Committee

6 Urgency Committee

Some years ago the Fire Authority established an Urgency Committee to deal with matters where an urgent decision is required. In practice it is actually more difficult to call a meeting of this Committee than a Special Meeting of the Fire Authority: the former requires all of its 7 specific Members to attend in order to be quorate, whereas the latter is quorate with any 6 Members of the Authority. Furthermore, the Committee has met only twice, in August 2004 and January 2005. Under the circumstances, officers recommend the dissolution of this Committee.

Recommendation: that the Urgency Committee is dissolved

7 Brigade Managers Employment Panel

This six-Member Panel, which includes the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority and Chair of the Human Resources Committee, considers and makes decisions on the pay and conditions of Brigade Managers and the Treasurer. No changes to this Panel are recommended.

8 Pensions Panel

This Panel is empowered to make decisions and exercise discretionary powers arising from employee pension scheme legislation and is made up of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority and Chair of the Human Resources Committee. No changes to this Panel are recommended.

9 Standards Committee

Having announced its intention to abolish Standards for England and the whole regime set up to deal with allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Government has included provisions within its Localism Bill to take this forward. For the time being, however, the Standards Committee and its sub-committees must remain in place until the Bill becomes law. When that happens, the Fire Authority will need to decide whether to retain a Standards Committee or whether matters relating to Member conduct could be dealt with by another of its committees. A full report on these issues will be brought to the Fire Authority at the appropriate time.

10 Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group (StRaP) and Budget Working Group

The Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group, formerly known as the Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) Working Group, was set up to consider recommendations emanating from the IRMP process. Its remit now also encompasses Public Value and its Members are expected to attend at least 5 consultations events per year in addition to any meetings of the Group. As it fulfils an important role, retention of the Group is recommended.

The Budget Working Group, membership of which mirrors that of the Strategy and Resources Committee, was set up some years ago to discuss informally all aspects of the budget setting process, including 'what if' scenarios. On a number of occasions recently joint meetings of this Group and the StRaP have taken place and 4 members sit on both Groups. In light of this there is merit in dissolving the Budget Working Group and its remit being taken over by the StRaP.

Recommendation: that consideration is given to dissolving the Budget Working Group and including its current role within the Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group

11 West Midlands Regional Management Board

Following a recommendation from the West Midlands Regional Management Board itself and subsequent approval of the Secretary of State, the Fire Authority agreed, in November 2010, to dissolve the Board. It is no longer necessary, therefore, to nominate Members of the Fire Authority to the Board.

12 West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services Regional Control Centre

In late December 2010 the Government announced its intention to terminate the contract for Regional Control Centres. There is no longer, therefore, a requirement for the Fire Authority to appoint one of its Members as a Director on the Centre's board.

13 Information Items

There is now an area on the Service's website dedicated to Member information items with an email alert system in place to notify Members when a new item has been added. This will avoid the need for a number of information items to be brought to Committees or the Fire Authority. It will, however, be necessary still to bring certain information items, because of their import.

14 Financial Implications

The merging or dissolving of committees and working groups may lead to a minor reduction in the travel allowances paid to Members for attending meetings.

15 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from the proposals made in this report.

16 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have determined that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

17 Appendices

Appendix A

Current Committee structure

Appendix B

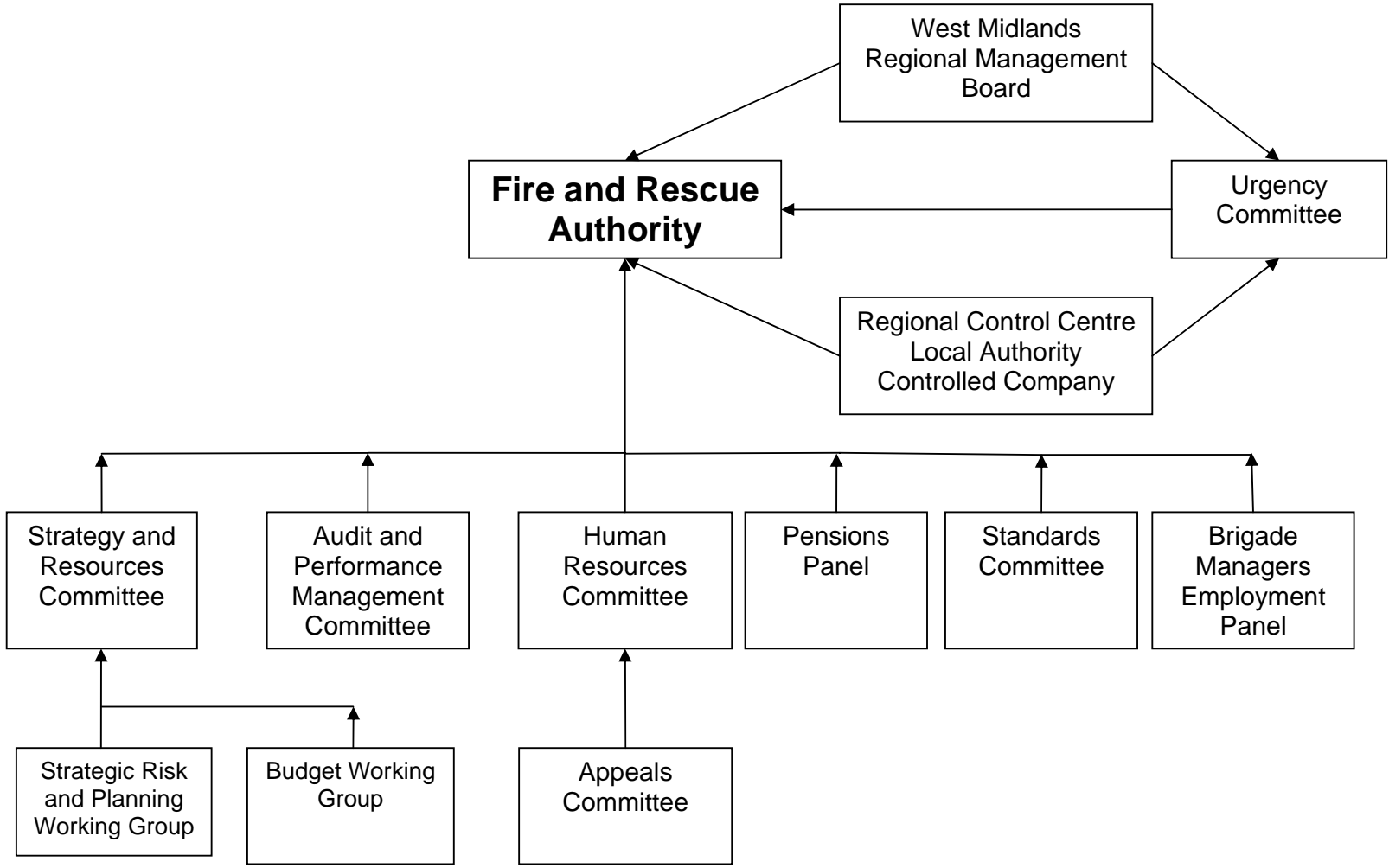
Proposed committee structure

18 Background Papers

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority Committee Terms of Reference
These can be found at the following link:

<http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/fra/members-handbook/section3>

**Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
 Current Committee Structure**



Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Proposed Committee Structure

Appendix B to report 10 on
Streamlining of Fire Authority Committees
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
27 April 2011

