

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority  
Standards Committee  
held at Brigade Headquarters, Shrewsbury  
on Wednesday, 11 October 2006 at 5.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mrs Holyoak and Mellings, and non-elected Independent Members, Mr Tebbutt (Chair) and Mr Webb

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Morgan.

## **2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **3 Minutes**

Members received the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting, held on 24 July 2006.

**Resolved:** *that the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting, held on 24 July 2006, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.*

## **4 Public Questions**

No questions, statements or petitions had been received from members of the public.

At the last meeting of the Standards Committee a Member asked whether it was commonplace for Standards Committees to receive public questions and the Clerk undertook to look into the matter. Having carried out a random check of six authorities (three of which were fire authorities), officers had not found any reference to public questions in the minutes of their Standards Committees. Accordingly, the Committee was asked to decide whether it wished to include this item on the agenda in future.

After some discussion Members agreed that, in the interests of openness and transparency, Public Questions should continue to be included on agendas of the Committee. Following a suggestion from the Chief Fire Officer it was also agreed that officers would set out on the Fire Authority's website the procedure for raising a public question.

**Resolved:** *that*

- a) *Public Questions continue to be included on agendas of the Committee; and*
- b) *Officers set out on the Fire Authority's website the procedure for raising a public question.*



## 5 West Mercia Independent Members' Forum

### Committee Clerk's Note

On the agenda the first part of the heading should have read 'West Mercia' not 'West Midlands'.

The Chair welcomed Mr Peter Rowland, the Convenor of the West Mercia Independent Members' Forum, to the meeting.

Mr Rowland said that meeting other non-elected Independent Members led to a sharing of experience, which was most helpful. He then gave an overview of the work of the Forum, which included details of:

- When it was set up
- Meetings
- Issues of concern
- Sharing good practice
- Future developments and, in particular, the launch of a national association for Independent Members.

During the course of his talk Mr Rowland tabled two documents: Sample Survey of Independent Representatives at the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees 2004; and West Mercia Independent Members' Forum Issues of Concern. Copies of both documents are attached to the signed minutes.

Members then asked a number of questions of Mr Rowland relating to training, public perception and media coverage of standards issues, and funding. It was noted that each regional forum did not have any funding but relied on the authorities hosting meetings to provide the support required.

The Chair thanked Mr Rowland for his presentation.

**Resolved:** *that Members note the presentation of the Convenor of the West Mercia Independent Members' Forum.*

Members received the minutes of the West Mercia Independent Members' Forum, held on 7 June 2006.

**Resolved:** *that Members note the minutes of the West Mercia Independent Members Forum meeting, held on 7 June 2006.*

## 6 Register of Members' Interests

This report updated the Standards Committee on the latest position regarding the completion of the Register of Members' Interests form.

**Resolved:** *that Members note the content of the report.*

## 7 Standards Board Bulletin

The latest Bulletin (no.30 July 2006) issued by the Standards Board for England was brought to Members for discussion, as previously agreed by the Committee. A copy of the Bulletin had been emailed to all Members of the Fire Authority (including the two Independent Members of the Standards Committee) on 9 August 2006.



Cllr Mrs Holyoak asked about the reference in the Bulletin to a press officer (page 7) and whether the Fire Authority had such an officer. The Chief Fire Officer replied that, although the Authority did not employ a full-time press officer, it did retain the services of a media consultant. It was unlikely, however, that the consultant would be aware of standards issues. It was, therefore, agreed that the consultant would be invited to the next meeting of the Committee to raise her awareness.

Cllr Mellings asked whether the Fire Authority intended to complete the self-assessment survey in the ethical governance toolkit, referred to in the Bulletin (page 8). Although aware of the survey, officers were unable to provide any further detail and offered to bring a report on the issue to the next meeting of the Committee.

**Resolved:** *that*

- a) *Members note the content of the Bulletin;*
- b) *Officers invite the Fire Authority's media consultant to the next meeting of the Committee; and*
- c) *Officers bring a report regarding the self-assessment survey in the ethical governance toolkit to the next meeting of the Committee.*

## **8 Draft Ethical Standards Bulletin**

A draft of the Ethical Standards Bulletin, which would be published by Borough of Telford & Wrekin in mid October and emailed to all Members of the Fire Authority (including the two Independent Members of the Standards Committee), was brought to Members for discussion, as previously agreed by the Committee.

The Group Solicitor tabled a later version of the draft Bulletin, which included details of recent cases heard by the Adjudication Panel for England. A copy of this draft document is attached to the signed minutes.

The Chair referred to cases, where it was recommended that the Member concerned receive training in the Code of Conduct, and asked who would carry out this training. The Group Solicitor responded that the Monitoring Officer would normally do this on a one-to-one basis. He undertook to check the detail of individual cases to find out whether there was any specific reference as to who should conduct the training.

**Resolved:** *that Members note the content of the bulletin.*

## **9 Time of Meetings**

Currently all meetings of the Standards Committee were scheduled to commence at 5.00 pm. In order to ensure that all Members were able to attend the meetings the Committee was asked to consider whether future meetings should commence at the later time of 5.30 pm.

**Resolved:** *that the next two meetings of the Standards Committee (22 January and 16 April 2007) commence at 5.15 pm, after which time the situation would be reviewed.*

The meeting closed at 6.05 pm.

**CHAIR:**.....

**DATE:**.....

