



ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING

Held on Monday 8 June 2009 at 5pm

Meeting Room 3, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4FS

Independent Members present: Mr John Giles
Mr Albert Gregory (Chairman)
Professor Christopher Guy
Mr John Quinton
Mr Jonathan Taylor
Mr Ronald Webb

Elected Members present: Councillor Peter Jones (*part meeting*)

In attendance: Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)

Action

01.01.09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Prue Bray (Elected Member) and Councillor Colin Dudley (Elected Member).

01.02.09 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Standards Committee Members declared a Personal non Prejudicial Interest, as Co-opted Independent Members of the Fire Authority, in relation to Agenda Item 4 (Scheme of Member Allowances Report). No further Declarations of Interest were made.

01.03.09 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 NOVEMBER 2008

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2008 were **Agreed** as a correct record for signing by the Chairman, the meetings having been called for 15 January 2009 and 12 March 2009 being cancelled due to lack of business.

Councillor Peter Jones joined the meeting and conveyed his apologies for being late to the meeting.

01.04.09 SCHEME OF MEMBER ALLOWANCES REPORT

The Committee was concerned that the legal requirement that Elected Members of the Fire Authority and Local Authorities in general were required to consider and vote on their own level of allowance, placed Elected Members in a difficult and invidious position, particularly in the current financial climate.

The Committee considered the Independent Review of the Fire Authority's Scheme of Member Allowances, conducted by Dr Declan Hall (Inlogov, School of Government and Policy, The University of Birmingham), and commissioned by

the Fire Authority, and the recommendations presented on the range and levels of remuneration and expenses for its Members, the salient points of discussion being:

- i) The Chairman felt that the Independent Report was well presented.
- ii) Mr Ronald Webb felt that the independent recommendation that remunerated time for Members be based on a minimum of 12 days per year as the expected minimum time input for the Basic Allowance was somewhat cautious, as he recollected that previous assumptions had been based on 14 2/3 days.
- iii) Councillor Peter Jones felt that all Authority Member Allowance Schemes should be agreed nationally and not locally.
- iv) Councillor Peter Jones did not support any increase to Fire Authority Member Allowances
- v) Councillor Peter Jones felt that, as Elected Members are already in receipt of an Allowance paid by their respective Unitary Authority, Members should not be paid any additional allowances by Outside Bodies, as Fire Authority Member duties and responsibilities should be considered as an extension of their work undertaken as a Unitary Authority Councillor. This was supported by Professor Christopher Guy and Mr John Quinton. Councillor Peter Jones did, however, accept that it might be appropriate for the Fire Authority Chairman, and possibly the Vice-Chairman, to receive a small allowance for the additional work that they would be expected to undertake, but not if they were already in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance from their respective Unitary Authority.
- vi) Mr John Quinton believed that there should not be an assumption that Members should receive an allowance for their work as a Fire Authority Member, and that remuneration should not be extended to those who are afforded a good standard of living.
- vii) Mr John Quinton felt that a more fundamental Review should have been conducted, and that consideration might wish to be given to re-visiting the Terms of Reference of this Review.
- viii) Mr Jonathan Taylor felt that the principles of the report were rational.
- ix) Mr Ronald Webb felt that the recommended Basis Allowance of £1,800, based on the Local Government Act daily rate (2008), and rounded up/down to the highest £10, was over generous when compared with those Allowances being paid by some other Combined Fire Authorities and amongst the Schemes of constituent Unitary Authorities.
- x) Mr Jonathan Taylor felt that Local Authority Councillors/Fire Authority Members should not be deterred from claiming allowances as part of an agreed Allowance Scheme; however Members might wish to consider mitigating their allowance by charitable donation.



The Standards Committee:

- a) **Noted** the contents of the report.
- b) **Recommended** that the Executive Committee should **Note** the report.
- c) **Supported** the principles of the Independent Review, and in **Accepting** the formulaic principles of the report, **Recommended** that the Fire Authority give consideration to adjusting the multiplier.
- d) **Recommended** that Members be reminded that they might wish to consider the renunciation of their Allowances (*Members' Handbook MA8 refers - "A Member may, by notice in writing to the Clerk & Monitoring Officer, elect to forego any part of his/her entitlement to an allowance under this Scheme"*).
- e) **Recommended** that, should more than 12 Members become eligible for a Special Responsibility Allowance, the decision on which Special Responsibility Allowance should lie fallow to comply with the 12 maximum Special Responsibility Allowances payable rule should not be reserved to the Standards Committee, but to the Fire Authority.
- f) **Recommended** that the Fire Authority should make appropriate representations to the Government for consideration of a national scheme for Fire Authority and Local Authority Member Allowances, and that this should be addressed at the earliest opportunity.

02.05.08 UPDATE REPORT FROM THE CLERK AND MONITORING OFFICER

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer provided an update on Member activity and issues arising, the salient updates and discussion points being:

- a) **Fire Authority's Committee Structure** - the Clerk and Monitoring Officer summarised the proposed Committee structure changes to be presented to the Fire Authority at its Annual Meeting on 24 June 2009. She advised that there would be no changes made to the Standards Committee's Terms of Reference other than the consequential change of removing "overview of the Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy" to the remit of the proposed 'Audit and Performance Review Committee'.
- b) **Annual Standards Board for England Conference** in Birmingham (12-13 October 2009) entitled "Bringing Standards into focus" - following expressions of interest from Mr John Giles and Mr Jonathan Taylor, it was **Agreed** that they would attend the conference with the Clerk and Monitoring Officer.
- c) **Members' attendance at meetings** - the Clerk and Monitoring Officer drew the Committee's attention to Members' attendance records for 2008/09 to date, and advised that, since the report was written, the Fire Authority's

Committee
Manager



Audit Committee had not been able to meet on 28 May 2009 as it had not been quorate. She reported that the Audit Committee would have considered the draft Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of Accounts, which would now be presented to the Fire Authority at its Annual Meeting without having been considered previously by a Committee, and, as a result, as advised by the Authority Treasurer, the Auditors might make an adverse comment in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Review.

The Committee also considered its current Work Programme, as detailed at Paragraph 9 of the presented Update Report, and it was **Agreed**:

- To review of Corporate Complaints Procedure at a future meeting.
- To review the Member's Register of Interests, including gifts and hospitality received, at the next meeting.

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Agenda
10.08.09

The Standards Committee:

- a) **Noted** the contents of the Update Report.
- b) **Agreed** that Member Attendance data be sent to each Unitary Authority annually.
- c) **Agreed** that the Fire Authority should be advised of the Standards Committee's grave concerns that, as a result of Members' non attendance, at times, at meetings of the Fire Authority's Committees which resulted in some meetings not being held as they were inquorate, this was frustrating the work of the Fire Authority.
- d) **Supported** that further consideration be given to shared training with other Authorities with regard to Local Assessment, to be hosted by the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, but noted that the training should not be over-subscribed, and limited to, for example, 15-20 people per training session.

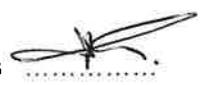
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01.06.09 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY

The Standards Committee considered the content of its Annual Report to the Fire Authority, and it was **Agreed** that the Clerk and Monitoring Officer should prepare a draft report, for subsequent approval by the Chairman, to include the following:

CMO

- New Independent Members.
- Changes put in place to reflect the new Code of Conduct.
- Training.
- Fire Authority Member attendance.
- Scheme of Allowances.

**02.06.08 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

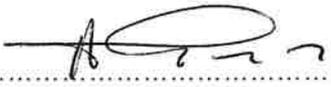
The Standards Committee considered a draft revised programme of meetings, which was subject to the Fire Authority's approval at its Annual Meeting, and it was **Agreed** to cancel the Standards Committee's scheduled meetings on 9 July 2009, 14 September 2009, and 9 November 2009 and re-schedule its forthcoming meetings, the Committee Manager to seek Members' availability prior to final confirmation of dates.

Committee
Manager

It was **Agreed** that the next meeting would now be held on:

- Monday 10 August 2009 at 5pm (venue to be confirmed)

Minutes signed by Chairman as a correct record:

Signature 

Print Name ALBERT GREGORY

Date signed: 10 August 2009

