

MINUTES OF THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS ON TUESDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2003 COMMENCING AT 1000 HOURS AND CONCLUDED AT 1300 HOURS.

Present:

Fire Authority Members: Owen E Jeffery, R Webb

Independent Members: P Harris, D Distin JP, P Sidwell

In Attendance: C Williams (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)

Apologies: G Mayes (Independent Member)

1.01/03 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Mr Peter Harris an Independent Member of the Committee be appointed as Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

1.02/03 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor Ron Webb, an Authority Member of the Committee be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year

1.03/03 MEMBERSHIP OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Clerk reported that Mr Derek Wilson had resigned from the Committee, as he was no longer able to attend daytime meetings. That left an Authority vacancy for a Conservative member. The Committee Administrator would be asked to approach Mr Patman, the Vice-Chairman and Leader of the Conservative Group on the Authority for a replacement nomination which would be approved by the Fire Authority at its meeting on Tuesday 21 October 2003..

NOTED

1.04/03 LENGTH OF TERM OF OFFICE

The Clerk drew attention to the fact that under the Committee's constitution, members had been appointed for a year. He suggested that it would be reasonable to seek Authority approval to extend the term of office.

RECOMMENDED: That:

- 1. That the Authority extend the term of office of existing members to three years, with the option to extend membership for a further term of three years.**

2. **That having served two terms of office, a member should vacate the Committee for at least a year before being eligible for further appointment.**
3. **That having regard to the fact that the Committee would meet infrequently, Authority SO 5A on attendance should be varied in the case of the Standards Committee to provide that any member of the Committee missing two consecutive meetings should be asked to give an explanation and that failure to attend three consecutive meetings without the agreement of the Committee, would lead to that member ceasing to be a member of the Committee.**

1.05/03 COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee considered their terms of reference in detail. It was noted that apart from dealing with any complaints that might be received, the Committee were responsible for providing training and guidance to Members on issues of conduct, Standards and Policy and they were also responsible for arranging an Ethical Governance Audit of the Authority, its processes and procedures.

The Committee felt they would be better placed to undertake their duties if they could meet with the Standards Committee of neighbouring Fire Authorities. In view of this it was **RESOLVED: That:**

1. **That the Clerk seek to establish a joint meeting of the Committee with the Standards Committee of Oxfordshire CC and Bucks and Milton Keynes Fire Authority.**
2. **That if such a meeting proved constructive consideration be given to sharing experiences with non-Fire Authorities eg Thames Valley Police Authority, possibly through the good offices of ACTVAR**

1.06/03 SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES FOR MEMBERS

At the start of the meeting, the Vice-Chairman and Mr Jeffery declared an interest and offered to withdraw. They were asked to stay at the meeting by the Independent Members and participate so that the Independent Members could have the benefit of their experience and knowledge. The Committee then considered a Report from the Clerk (not reproduced) which drew attention to the allowances, where previously no powers had been enacted to make any payment at all.

The Clerk drew attention to the fact that the Authority was not required to set up an Independent Remuneration Panel and had therefore charged the Standards Committee with putting forward proposals. However, in view of this the Clerk's report had appended the recommendations of the Unitaries' IRP with the exception of Bracknell Forest BC, where work was still in hand. Also appended was a Schedule showing what decisions Unitary Council (apart from Bracknell) had taken.

- The Report also compared the work load of a member of the Authority with that of a member of a Unitary Council.
- The Committee's attention was also drawn to the fact that the LGA have recommended members' daily rate of £105.10p.

- The Committee were also advised that the Authority had made provision of £25k for members allowances.

The Committee discussed also the rationale for making a scheme. They recognised that payment was intended to compensate members at least in part, for the time spent on Council work but the view was that members should ensure good attendance, so that the Authority's business was officially handled. It was noted that in the past Authority attendance had been poor and the Committee felt it reasonable in approving a Scheme of Allowances, the Authority should also take the appropriate steps to ensure good attendance.

Following detailed discussion, the Committee **RECOMMENDED: That:**

1. **The Authority pay a basic allowance of £400 to each member of the Authority**
2. **The Authority pay Special Responsibility Allowances to the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Leaders of the Labour Group as follows:**

Fire Authority Chairman	£6000
Fire Authority Vice Chairman	£3000
Leaders of the Labour Group	£1500

3. **The Authority pay Travel and Subsistence at the approved rate and make budget provision of £2,500.**
4. **The Authority pay a childcare Allowance at the approved rate of £6 an hour.**
5. **All these allowances be effective from 1 May 2003 in accordance with the Regulations.**
6. **The Authority strictly conform to SO 5A relating to attendance and that a report be made to the next meeting of the Committee on attendance levels.**

1.07/03 COMMITTEE REPORTING TO THE AUTHORITY

The Committee was advised by the Vice Chairman that at Slough Borough Council there was a slot on every Council Agenda to give the Chairman of the Standards Committee the right to address the Council if he or she so wished.

As Members felt this was a sensible initiative it was **RECOMMENDED: That the Chairman of the Standards Committee be given the right to address the Authority in person, should he so wish.**

1.08/03 MR D C H WILLIAMS – CLERK AND MONITORING OFFICER

The Vice-Chairman offered a vote of thanks to Mr Clive Williams for all the work he had done over the past few years and wished him well in his forthcoming retirement. This was enthusiastically supported by the entire Committee.

Signed:.....
Chairman

Date: 5 February 2004

