

At a meeting of the HAMPSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY  
STANDARDS & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE held at Hampshire Fire and  
Rescue Service Headquarters, Eastleigh on 28 June, 2012

PRESENT:

Councillors: R. McIntosh (Chair), L. Fairhurst (Vice Chair), C. Carter, J. Frankum, T. Knight, P. Smith and M. Tucker.

**1 APOLOGIES ACTION**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Darragh, D. Harrison and C. McEwing

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that, where they believed they had a personal or personal prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should normally, at the time of debate, declare their interest and having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Code.

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 March 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Phil Smith from Portsmouth City Council to his first meeting of the Standards & Governance Committee following his recent appointment.

**5 DEPUTATIONS**

There were no deputations received for this meeting.

**6 REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee received an updated Terms of Reference for the new Standards & Governance Committee (Item 6 in the Minute Book). This was accepted by Committee.

## 7 LOCALISM ACT 2011 – IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGES TO THE STANDARDS REGIME

The Committee considered the report of the Clerk (Item 7 in the Minute Book), which summarised the changes to the standards regime arising from the implementation of the Localism Act.

The officer detailed the changes and highlighted that an Independent Person would need to be appointed by the Authority, their main role being to advise the Authority on the outcome of any complaint it had decided should be investigated. As the incidence of complaints was very low, it was proposed to update the existing complaints handling arrangements where necessary to comply with the Localism Act, rather than undertake a more fundamental review. These arrangements could be the subject of further review at a later stage, if desired. Members were supportive of shared arrangements being developed with other local authorities in Hampshire where possible.

It was proposed that a flow chart be produced summarising the process for handling complaints.

Kevin  
Gardner /  
Legal

Under Paragraph 6.7 of the report, the Committee considered that £500 would be an appropriate level of payment for the services of the Independent Person, as it was unlikely that they would be required on a regular basis although they would need to be trained.

The Committee agreed to constitute a selection panel, which would interview candidates for the role of an Independent Person, comprising:

- the Chairman
- Cllr Frankum, Hampshire County Council
- Cllr Phil Smith, Portsmouth City Council

The Committee considered whether provision should be made in the Code of Conduct for disclosure of any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests in addition to disclosable pecuniary interests. Particular consideration was given to receipt of gifts and hospitality. However, it was felt that requiring disclosure of only those interests specified by Government as disclosable pecuniary interests was appropriate and proportionate.

In paragraph 20.1 of the report, it was agreed that a time limit of 14 days would be included for notification of the outcome of a hearing..

RESOLVED:

1. The “Arrangements” for handling allegations of failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, set out in the Schedule to the report, were agreed and RECOMMENDED to the Authority for approval and adoption;
2. The approval and adoption of the “Arrangements” to be publicised via the Authority’s website;
3. Applications for an Independent Person would be sought via the Authority’s website and the selection criteria in Paragraph 6.5 was agreed;
4. A Selection Panel comprising the Chairman, Cllr Jane Frankum and Cllr Phil Smith was set up to short-list and interview candidates and make recommendations to the Authority for appointment;
5. That it be a RECOMMENDATION to the Authority that the Independent Person should receive payment of £500 per annum; and
6. That it be a RECOMMENDATION to the Authority that the Authority’s Code of Conduct should not require the disclosure of any pecuniary or other interests other than those legally prescribed as disclosable pecuniary interests..

**8 AUDIT PLAN 2011/12**

The Committee considered a covering report from the Chief Officer (Item 8 in the Minute Book) regarding the Audit Commission’s Audit Plan for 2011/12.

The Committee were informed that systems work had been completed and no significant risks had been identified. The Authority was found to have a sound control environment and accurate figures.

A review of the Annual Governance Statement and final accounts was to be undertaken in the near future.

RESOLVED:

The Committee received and accepted the Audit Commission’s Audit Plan for 2011/12

**9 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2011/12**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Officer (Item 9 in the Minute Book), which updated the Committee on the Annual Governance Statement for 2011/12.

The officer highlighted Section 11 of the Statement, which summarised actions taken to improve governance arrangements. The Statement was signed by the Chairman of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

The Annual Governance Statement 2011/12 (set out as Appendix 1 to the report) was approved for inclusion in the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2011/12.

10 **ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT OPINION 2011/12**

The Committee considered the report of the Treasurer (Item 10 in the Minute Book), regarding audit work that had been completed during 2011/12. The report concluded that Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority's framework of governance, risk management and management control is adequate and working in practice.

The officer confirmed that some aspects were awaiting final sign off, but overall there were no significant issues. It was also confirmed that three reviews did not involve an audit assessment score and were therefore omitted from the table in Paragraph 5.5 of the report.

The Committee agreed that "adequate" did not seem to fairly reflect achievements made, but acknowledged that this was down to the terminology used for audit purposes.

RESOLVED:

The audit work completed during the year was noted and the Internal Audit Assurance for 2011/12 detailed in Paragraph 4.2 was accepted.

11. **PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNAL AUDIT MANAGEMENT ACTIONS**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Officer (Item 11 in the Minute Book), regarding a progress report on the implementation of internal audit management actions.

The officer confirmed that some actions were due to be completed by the 30 June 2012 and that they were on target. On Page 7 of Appendix 1, the Committee were informed that the audit had found there was no copy of references for some volunteers and that the recruiting process had differed to that of full time members of staff.

It was noted however that the volunteer recruitment process had since been aligned with the latter.

It was also agreed that sickness recording for operational staff could be complicated and this had exacerbated the issue reported on Page 6 of Appendix 1

#### RESOLVED

The Committee approved the audit action reports, and progress made towards the implementation of recommendations.