

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority  
Standards Committee  
held at the Shirehall, Shrewsbury  
on Wednesday, 12 October 2005 at 5.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mellings and Morgan and non-elected Independent Members, Mr Tebbutt and Mr Webb

## **1 Election of Chair**

It was proposed by Councillor Morgan and seconded by Councillor Mellings

That Independent Member, Mr Tebbutt, be elected Chair of the Standards Committee to hold office until the meeting of the Standards Committee immediately following the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority.

There being no other nominations, Mr Tebbutt was duly elected Chair.

## **2 Appointment of Vice-Chair**

It was proposed by Mr Tebbutt and seconded by Mr Webb

That Councillor Morgan be appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee to hold office until the meeting of the Standards Committee immediately following the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Morgan was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

## **3 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs Holyoak.

## **4 Minutes**

**Resolved:** *that the minutes of the last meeting of the Standards Committee, held on 13 July 2005, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.*

## **5 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **6 Public Questions**

No questions had been received from members of the public.



## 7 Procedure for Local Investigation of Alleged Breaches of the Code of Conduct by Members

Members received a report of the Clerk, which recommended that the Committee agree a procedure for the local investigation of alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct, and sought approval from the Committee of an agreed document outlining the appropriate procedure.

The Fire Authority's Solicitor brought Members' attention to the appendices to the report. The document 'How to conduct an investigation' had been released in July and set out advice on the procedure to be followed. Members discussed the proposed procedure for the Fire Authority and, in particular, paragraph 5.4, which related to indemnities.

Members were informed that a report on indemnities would be considered at the December meeting of the Fire Authority. Following a short discussion, it was agreed, therefore, that the sentence relating to indemnities should be deleted for the time being. Members did, however, request that it be considered for inclusion again at the next meeting of the Standards Committee, when the decision of the Fire Authority would be known.

Members' views were sought on precedent letters and it was agreed that they would be extremely useful for everyone concerned. It was also agreed that the procedure, including the letters, should be Crystal Marked. Although, following Crystal Marking, on occasion the context could be lost; Members did agree that the process should be carried out.

Members considered the use of telephone interviews. It was felt that, unless it was completely necessary, they should be avoided.

Members went on to discuss the monitoring of witness expenses. It was suggested that the Monitoring Officer and the Chair of the Standards Committee should authorise any expenses and that payment would be made via the Committee and Administration Manager, through the Fire Authority's Treasurer.

A discussion took place regarding a timeframe for the Member (against whom the allegation had been made) to comment on the draft report. Members agreed that 21 days would be acceptable, subject to discretion for a reasonable extension, should this be required.

Subject to the foregoing, it was

**Resolved:** *that the Fire Authority be recommended to adopt the procedure.*

## 8 Fourth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees

Members received a report, providing information about the Fourth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees, which took place on 5 and 6 September 2005.

Members said that they had found the Assembly both interesting and informative. They commented, however, that far too many abbreviations had been used and that this had been raised at the Assembly by non-elected Independent Members.



**Resolved:** *that Members:*

- a) *Note the contents of the report; and*
- b) *Agree that the Chair of the Standards Committee and officers of the Fire Authority continue to attend future Annual Assemblies of Standards Committees.*

## **9 Ethical Standards Bulletin**

Members received a copy of the Ethical Standards Bulletin, which had been issued by Borough of Telford & Wrekin.

The Solicitor informed Members that the Bulletin had been sent to Parish Councillors, Members of Borough of Telford & Wrekin and also to Fire Authority Members. The Bulletin was to be published on a quarterly basis and Members confirmed that they were interested in receiving a copy.

**Resolved:** *that Fire Authority Members continue to receive future bulletins.*

## **10 West Mercia Independent Members' Forum**

Members received the minutes of the meeting of the West Mercia Independent Members' Forum, which had been held on 10 March 2005.

Independent Member, Ian Webb, had attended the Forum. He reported that it had been a good discussion group and had provided non-elected Independent Members with an opportunity to talk about their role within their own authority. Both Mr Webb and Mr Tebbutt commented that Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority's approach in terms of support and involvement of its non-elected Independent Members was extremely welcoming.

**Resolved:** *that the minutes be noted.*

The meeting closed at 6.00 pm.

**CHAIR:**.....

**DATE:**.....

