

COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE HEREFORD & WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY TO THE CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES

MEETING HELD ON 16 JUNE 2008

1. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Authority was updated in respect of Standards Committee meetings that had taken place through 2007/08. The Authority noted the Local Assessment report and agreed to develop the recommendations made by the Standards Board.

2. It was agreed that Standards Committee Members would receive update reports from the Clerk on the Local Assessments as and when they were available and that the membership of the Standards Committee would remain the same as present.
3. The Authority resolved to give the Standards Committee the authority to consider whether a sub-group be set up or arrangements made with an adjoining Authority regarding reviews of initial assessments of investigations.
4. It was also agreed that joint training for new Standards Committee Members and Chairmanship training with other Authorities should be investigated and that any decisions regarding joint training should be referred to the Standards Committee for approval.

5. STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

It was agreed that Dr M Mylechreest, Nr R Rogers, Mr C Emeny, Mr R Gething and Mr D Stevens be reappointed for a three year term of office as Independent Members to run until the Authority Meeting in June 2011.

6. MEMBERS ALLOWANCE AGREEMENT

Previously at its meeting in June 2007 the Authority had agreed to ask the Independent Remuneration Panels of the Constituent Authorities if Members' Allowances should remain in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI) or if it should be amended to be in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). It was agreed that Members' Allowances would now be adjusted each year in line with the Consumer Price Index.

7. SERVICE REPORT

The Authority was informed of the Service Activities for the previous quarter together with operational and statistical details. The number of incidents had decreased by 1.5% in quarter 4, compared to quarter 4 in 2006/07. The Service continues to perform well in excess of the Local Area Agreement targets relating to deliberate primary and secondary fires in South Worcestershire, Redditch and Wyre Forest. More details can be found on the service website (www.hwfire.org.uk).

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8. PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL RESULTS 2007/08

After considering the information regarding the Revenue and Capital income and expenditure position for 2007/08, the Authority resolved that due to the increase in fuel costs, a reserve of £0.080m be set aside for this purpose. It was also resolved that the revenue under-spend of £139,000 be transferred to general balances, and the increase in 2008/09 Capital Budgets arising from expenditure slippage be approved.

9. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2009/12

The Authority approved the draft 2009/12 IRMP and the 2009/10 Annual Action Plan for consultation. The draft IRMP describes how the Authority will reduce community and organisational risk and improve performance within the current budget settlement over the next three years.

10. Following the consultation period, the Authority will need to consider ways that money can be saved without reducing service delivery. The proposals include reducing operational posts, streamlining back-office functions, investment in training, strengthening crewing and exploring collaboration with neighbouring Fire & Rescue Authorities.

11. JOINT SERVICE REVIEW - WARWICKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Authority approved that the Member/Officer Review Group established in October 2007 be reconvened in line with the previously agreed Terms of Reference. This Group will consider options to improve Service efficiencies through closer working arrangements. The Group is now charged with concluding the review with a view to make final recommendations to each of the Authorities in September 2008.

12. SERVICE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2008/09

The Authority approved the 2008/09 Service Performance Plan which set out the Authority's area of focus for 2008/09 and its performance in 2007/08. The Plan also incorporates the Integrated Risk Management Action Plan, Community Safety Strategy, Best Value Performance Plan and the Annual Governance Statement.

13. LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS 2008/11

The Authority was updated in respect of the new Local Area Agreements for Herefordshire and Worcestershire. It was noted that the Service had improved its profile within the Local Strategic Partnerships and had been particularly successful in focusing attention on the wider community safety agenda.

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14. FLOOD SCRUTINY

The Authority noted the published Flood Scrutiny report that Mr A Fry presented on behalf of the Best Value Policy and Performance Committee. It was resolved to share the Flood Scrutiny with the Constituent Authorities, District Councils and local MP's. A copy of the report is attached at Appendix 1.

15. SERVICE SUPPORT UPDATE – NATIONAL FIREFIGHTER SELECTION TESTS (NFST)

The Authority noted that the NFST would be used for the recruitment of Retained Duty System Firefighters, and that the full NFST will now be used within Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.

16. EQUALITY STANDARD FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Members were informed that the Authority had been successfully assessed against level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, and been awarded the Equality Mark. It was noted that Hereford & Worcester had taken a leading role nationally regarding Equality & Diversity, which had been highlighted during the recent launch of the national Equality & Diversity Strategy.

17. AUTHORITY'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION

Members approved the establishment of the Authority's Certificate of Commendation for individuals who were considered to have made a significant contribution to the survival of people in extreme danger. This award was presented at the Service's award ceremony on 5 July 2008 at Service Headquarters.

18. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Authority were informed of the new CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework, which set out the 'principle of good practice' based on six standards, part of which referred to the Annual Governance Statement which had subsumed the Statement of Internal Control. This was noted.

PAUL HAYDEN
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE
HEREFORD & WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
JUNE 2008

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Any person wishing to seek further information on this report should contact: Committee Services on 0845 12 24454. Further information on the Fire and Rescue Authority and the Fire and Rescue Service can also be found on the Internet at (www.hwfire.org.uk).