

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	18/03/19
Lead Officer	Colin Everett, Clerk to the Authority
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Subject	The Standards Committee's Annual Report



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present the Standards Committee Annual Report to the Fire and Rescue Authority for approval.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 As a matter of good corporate governance the Standards Committee provides the Authority with an annual report on its activities during each financial year.
- 3 Consequently the Committee's fourteenth annual report is attached for Members' consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

- 4 That Members approve the Standards Committee's annual report.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE OF NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY 2018/19

Background

This is the Standards Committee's fourteenth annual report to the Fire and Rescue Authority and spans the period from April 2018 to March 2019. Legislation requires that Standards Committees meet at least annually.

The Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee provide a remit to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members of the Authority and to oversee the whistle-blowing policy for complaints against Members of the Authority. Also, where statute permits, to receive reports and complaints about Members and to conduct or oversee investigations and make recommendations to the Authority.

Membership

The new independent Members, Sally Ellis and Julia Hughes, attended their first meeting in March 2018.

David Morris's term of office came to an end on 31 August 2018. As he had reached the end of his second term he was not eligible for re-appointment.

An online recruitment campaign for a new independent member jointly with Cyngor Gwynedd was held, and adverts were placed in two newspapers in accordance with legislation, but no applications were received. A further recruitment exercise will be undertaken to fill the vacancy.

Therefore the Standards Committee currently has the following membership:

Independent Members

Antony P Young 01/04/16 - 31/03/20

Sally Ellis 01/01/18 – 31/12/2021

Julia Hughes 01/01/18 – 31/12/2021

Fire and Rescue Authority Members

Councillor Dylan Rees (19/06/18 onwards)

Councillor Owen Thomas (19/06/18 onwards)

Attendance and Issues

The Standards Committee met twice during the year.

On 2 October 2018, all Members were present. Antony Young was appointed Chair and Julia Hughes appointed as Deputy Chair.

The Committee agreed to review all the codes and protocols within the Constitution to ensure that they are up to date and remain pertinent. It agreed a timetable to achieve this within 2 years.

Members reviewed the revised protocol for receiving gifts and hospitality and code of conduct and the member employee relations protocol. Both these protocols are included in the revised constitution for the Authority to approve.

Members received a report on the sanctions guidance of the Adjudication Panel for Wales. The contents of the guidance were noted, and Members agreed to support the all-Wales Standards Conference action for the Welsh Government to extend the range and flexibility of sanctions available to both the Standards Committee and the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

The Committee discussed councillors' attendance at FRA meetings and how to improve and encourage attendance at meetings. One option was to ask all councillors to agree to a voluntary policy which would mean having to attend at least 50% of all meetings or be considered for deselection. In order to take any further action, all councils would have to agree to such a policy and it would also need to be approved by Authority Members.

The Committee met again on 7 February 2019. At this meeting, Members considered the revised version of the Authority's social media policy and the WLGA social media policy for councillors document recently published; it was agreed to recommend that the Authority adopt both documents alongside each other. The stage 3 complaints procedure in respect of FRA Members had been revised and it was agreed to recommend it to the Authority for approval.

The Committee received an update on attendance of FRA members at meetings. It was noted that informal action had been taken to resolve some attendance issues, and members therefore agreed to keep the matter under review at future meetings.

Complaints against Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority

There were no complaints about FRA Members during this period.

Financial Implications

The budget for the Standards Committee is managed through a single budget heading for all Authority costs. Since 2012, independent members of the Standards Committee are entitled to claim remuneration based on meetings and events attended. For attending meetings in this financial year, a total of £671.80 has been claimed.

Conclusion

The Standards Committee recommends that the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority notes its annual report 2018/19.