

AWDURDOD TÂN CANOLBARTH A GORLLEWIN CYMRU



MID AND WEST WALES FIRE AUTHORITY

**COFNODION
CYFARFOD Y PWYLLGOR SAFONAU**

Pencadlys Y Gwasanaeth Tân, Heol Llwyn Pisgwydd
Caerfyrddin
30 Ebrill 2007

**MINUTES
OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING**

held at Fire Service Headquarters, Lime Grove Avenue,
Carmarthen
30 April 2007

11.00am – 11.55am

PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

CADEIRYDD/CHAIR: G Morgan

IS-GADEIRYDD/VICE CHAIR: S Fox

AELODAU/MEMBERS: M Howells, R Martin
Cyng/Cllrs: G Seabourne, JJJ Davies,
P James

1 DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL INTERESTS

None were declared

2 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS/PERSONAL MATTERS

The Chair reported that since the last meeting, the Clerk's mother had passed away and members stood as a mark of respect.
The Chair paid tribute to Judith Morris, former Head of Corporate Services and Member Support, who had recently left the Service to take up a post in the Ministry.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that a letter of thanks be sent to Judith Morris for the help and support she had shown during the course of her work with the Standards Committee.

2 TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2nd OCTOBER 2006

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October 2006 were received and approved as a true record

3 TO RECEIVE EXEMPT INFORMATION – CHANGES TO SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

The Clerk reported that the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007 had been made on the 21st March 2007 and came into force on 21st April 2007. Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 permitted an Authority to exclude the public from a meeting whenever it was likely that there would otherwise be a disclosure of exempt information to the public. The categories of exemption were contained in Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended). The latest Order simplified Schedule 12A by reducing the number of exempt categories, whilst making it compatible with the Data protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Of particular significance for Standards Committees were the provisions of the The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Decisions, Documents and Meetings) and the Standards Committees (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2007, whereby the application of the revised Schedule 12A had been further modified when the Committee met to deal with an allegation of a breach of the code of conduct. In such circumstances, after paragraph 18 of Schedule 12A further descriptions of exemptions would be inserted

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that Committee note the amendments to the exempt categories contained in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

4 STUDY INTO THE OPERATION AND ROLE OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES WITHIN LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Consideration was given to a report which summarised the results of surveys which had been undertaken by the Standards Board for England into the arrangements within local authorities of the operation and role of standards committees within authorities. This research had been undertaken against a backdrop of legislative change, with authorities becoming increasingly responsible for regulating the conduct of members within their authority, and a move towards local ownership of the ethical framework.

Two surveys had been administered: one targeted at monitoring officers within local authorities, the other at members of standards committees. The focus of the research incorporated several strands, including:

- Training delivered and future training demand;
- Role of monitoring officers and members of standards committees, and how these are perceived by other people within their authorities;
- Local investigations and hearings, and the level of confidence that authorities approach these with.

Whilst the survey covered English authorities only, the findings were useful to inform the situation in Wales. It was noted that the full report was available on the web or a copy could be sent to members if required.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the report be received and noted

5 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Notification had been received from the Welsh Assembly Government of the timetable for taking forward the review of the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct Review Group had been reconvened, comprising representatives of relevant Authorities in Wales, to consider the terms of the revised code before submitting the required statutory instrument to the Minister for approval following the Assembly elections next May. Thereafter approval of the statutory instrument by the National Assembly was scheduled to take place before the end of the summer with the Code coming into force before the end of 2007. This would enable adequate training to be put into place before the Code was implemented. It was envisaged that such training would be made on a collaborative basis across Wales.

Of interest to Members was that a revised model code of conduct in England had been laid before Parliament on 4 April with an effective date of 3 May 2007. The Authority's legal advisors, Eversheds, had provided a briefing paper on the new code, which was attached to the report.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The progress made be noted by Committee

6 TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE FOR 2006/07

The Clerk presented a report which provided a summary of the work of the Standards Committee for 2006/07. This report would be presented to the Fire & Rescue Authority for approval on the 21st May 2007.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The report be received and noted and presented to the Fire Authority on 21st May 2007

7 TO REVIEW COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2006 TO 31ST MARCH 2007

The number of complaints received for the period April 2006 – March 2007 had increased in comparison with the same reporting period last year although of the 37 complaints received, only 10 have been upheld, this being the same number as for 2005/2006.

The standard of complaint acknowledgement and investigation performance remained generally good, with all complaints being responded to within 4 – 5 days.

Approximately the same ratio of satisfaction questionnaires were returned as for the period last year and all complainants had been informed that the non-return of a questionnaire indicated that they would be deemed to be satisfied with the way in which the complaint was handled.

At the specific request of Committee, complaints in respect of conduct had been attached for information.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the report on complaints be received and noted