

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**12<sup>th</sup> February, 2007**

**1. STANDARDS COMMITTEE – APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS**

Report of the Monitoring Officer.

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to advertise for two independent members of the Standards Committee in accordance with the requirements of the Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) Regulations 2001;
- 1.2 That the Appointments Committee undertake the selection process and make a recommendation to the Authority on the appointment of two independent members to serve for a three year term of office effective from the Annual Meeting to be held on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2007.

**2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to advise the Authority of the requirement to advertise for independent members to serve on the Standards Committee in accordance with the Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) Regulations 2001.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Section 53 of the Local Government Act 2000 requires the Authority to establish a Standards Committee and sets out the requirements for its membership.
- 3.2 The Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) Regulations 2001 require the Committee to have an independent membership of at least 25 per cent. The Standards Committee currently has three elected Members and there is therefore a statutory requirement for at least one independent member to be appointed. The Committee, in accordance with guidance from the Standards Board for England, currently has two independent members. One

of those independent members is currently the Chair of the Committee.

- 3.3 The Regulations further require the selection for the independent members to be as a result of applications made to the authority following an advertisement in at least one newspaper circulating in the area.
- 3.4 The current independent members of the Committee, Mr Martin Chambers [Chair] and Mr Colin Topliss, were appointed by the Authority on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2004, for a term of three years expiring with the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2007.
- 3.5 On the previous two occasions independent members were selected by the Appointments Committee assisted by the Monitoring Officer. If approval is given to retain this arrangement, the duties of the Appointments Committee would be to shortlist applicants for interview; to interview those shortlisted; and to make a recommendation to the full Authority. The recommended candidate would have to be approved by a majority before he/she could take office.
- 3.6 Guidance from the Standards Board for England on the qualities to look for in independent representatives states that this will depend on the area the authority serves. However it is suggested that authorities may want to see that representatives:
  - are familiar with ethical dilemmas;
  - have experience with committee work;
  - have questioning skills;
  - are assertive; and
  - are independent of any political party and local government.
- 3.7 The current independent members are entitled to apply for re-appointment.
- 3.8 The independent members cannot have been a member or officer of the authority in the preceding five years, nor be a close friend or relative of a member or officer. An independent member may not be a member or officer of any other relevant joint authority (including all

Councils, Police, Fire or joint authorities.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1 In preparing this report, an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out as the matters referred to do not represent a change in the policies or functions of the Authority.
- 4.2 Anyone over the age of 21 and meeting the specified criteria may apply to be an independent member of the Standards Committee.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The establishment of the Standards Committee is a legal requirement.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The cost of advertising is estimated at £3,000. This can be met from existing resources. Independent members of the Standards Committee are entitled to claim travelling and subsistence allowances in respect of approved duties and this can be absorbed within the existing budget for Members' Allowances.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

NEERAJ SHARMA  
MONITORING OFFICER