

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

23rd May, 2005

1. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) MEMBER ARRANGEMENTS FOR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES**

Report of the Clerk.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Committee notes the revised LGA member arrangements for fire and rescue authorities.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To advise the Committee of revised member arrangements for fire and rescue authorities as contained in LGalert 119/05.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Consultation undertaken with fire authorities and local authorities at the end of last year revealed a degree of dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of current LGA arrangements for dealing with fire and rescue services matters.
- 3.2 Following extensive consultation, specific discussions with group leaders and other leading members at the LGA and Fire Services Forum, the LGA Executive on 10th March 2005 agreed the following:-
- Strategic responsibility of the Safer Communities Board for fire and other community safety and public protection issues be re-affirmed, noting that while fire policy issues are integral to the work of the Board, the Board's objectives are too broad and cross-cutting to deal with specific fire service issues.
 - The existing Fire Modernisation Task Group be replaced and re-titled, the new body being constituted from representatives of all types of fire authority and representation from the Regional Management Boards, with a clear programme of work set with the

agreement of the Safer Communities Board and dealing with the many day to day matters affecting fire and rescue services, in particular the development and implementation of the fire modernisation programme. This body would be required to make recommendations to the Safer Communities Board on many issues, although the exact terms of reference remain to be agreed.

- The Fire Services Forum be retained in its existing format and structure and the flexible nature of the Forum emphasised, such as the scope and style of meetings and the ability to establish sub-groups.
- Negotiations on pay and conditions continue to be managed on the United Kingdom basis by the Employers' Organisation National Joint Council (NJC) (Employers Side).

3.3 While appointments to these bodies will, with the exception of the Fire Services Forum, continue to be made by political groups and will reflect political proportionality at the LGA, there are three new important issues of representative consistency that will need to be accommodated in this process:-

- (1) The LGA Executive has agreed that the Chair of the body replacing the Fire Modernisation Task Group should have a place on the Safer Communities Board.
- (2) Through the LGA the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat political groups will appoint a fire spokesperson, who then becomes a core member of the body replacing the Fire Modernisation Task Group and a member of the Employer's' Organisation NJC (Employers Side).
- (3) The Chair of the Employers' Organisation (appointed by the LGA as a majority group) should have a place on the new body as well as the Central Local Partnership (CLP) sub-group on fire (an arena for high-level discussion with Government) that meets at least bi-annually.

3.4 The Fire Service Forum will continue to represent all fire authorities in proportion to their size. Nominations are received directly from each fire authority, although the political balance of the body is ensured through 'top-up' member appointments from each political group.

3.5 The issue of establishing a Special Interest Group for Combined Fire Authorities was also raised during the consultation process. The LGA Executive deferred consideration of this pending an assessment of the impact of the new Member arrangements set out above.

3.6 Much of the detail remains to be resolved. It is hoped to have the new arrangements in place and operational by June 2005.

4. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

5. **CORPORATE AIMS SUPPORTED**

The principal corporate aim supported by the information in this report is as follows:

4. To work in partnership with communities, other agencies and the Government.

6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Provision has been made in the Authority's budget to meet any costs involved relating to Members' allowances.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

LGAlert 119/05

F. N. SUMMERS
CLERK