

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

STANDARDS COMMITTEE - INDEPENDENT MEMBER

ROLE DESCRIPTION

The Authority is required to have a Standards Committee to oversee the standards and ethics of elected, co-opted and independent members. The Committee's role includes assessing and reviewing complaints about members and the conduct of hearings into alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct, as well as advising and raising awareness of issues relating to ethics and conduct.

The Committee currently comprises three independent members and six elected members. Independent members act as Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee. Independent members also chair the Assessment, Review, and Consideration and Hearings Sub-Committees.

Aims of Role

Independent members are important in helping increase public confidence in local government. They provide a clear signal that the Standards Committee acts fairly and impartially. They also bring a wider perspective to the Committee from their outside experiences.

Independent Members will:

- Attend, participate in and chair meetings of the Authority's Standards Committee and Sub-Committees.
- Assist Members of the Authority to observe the Members' Code of Conduct and to maintain high standards of conduct generally.

Skills and Competencies Required

1. A keen interest in standards in public life.
2. A wish to serve the local community and uphold local democracy.
3. High standards of personal integrity.
4. Familiar with ethical dilemmas.
5. Good communication skills both written and verbal.
6. Ability to act as the chair of an assessment or review sub-committee or a determination hearing or the Standards Committee. The Chair

will need to command the respect of members and the local community.

7. Ability to examine evidence and complex documentation; to take an objective, independent and unbiased view; and to exercise sound decision making skills.
8. Effective questioning skills.
9. Assertive and with leadership qualities, particularly in respect of exercising sound judgement.
10. Ability to speak in public and to make media statements.
11. Ability to represent the Authority to other bodies and organisations.

Time Commitment

Meetings of the Standards Committee are held during the day at the Fire Service Headquarters, and generally last one to two hours. The Committee meets on average four times a year.

Meetings of the Assessment, Review, and Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committees are held as and when necessary.

The Local Government Act 1972 provides that if an elected member fails to attend any meeting of the authority over a period of six consecutive months he shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the Authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the Authority. The same attendance requirement will apply to independent members of the Standards Committee. You will therefore be expected to abide by the six month rule and if you fail to do so, a vacancy will be declared.

Remuneration

This is a voluntary position and no annual allowance is payable, however travelling and subsistence expenses will be paid at the appropriate rate.

Induction and Training

An induction programme will be provided for independent members. Additional training is provided as necessary.

Indemnity arrangements

Independent members carrying out their statutory duties are protected by the Authority's indemnity arrangements under the Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order 2004.

Special Conditions

1. You cannot apply if you have been a Member or employee of the Authority at any time during the last 5 years or are a serving elected Member or employee.
2. You cannot apply if you are a relative or close friend of a Member or employee of the Authority.
3. You must sign an undertaking to comply with the Authority's Code of Conduct for Members and disclose your interests in the register of members' interests.
4. You must disclose whether you are an active member of any political party at local, regional or national level.
5. You must disclose whether you hold any contract with the Authority.
6. You must disclose whether you are a party to any outstanding complaint or grievance against the Authority.
7. Canvassing by the candidate will disqualify your application.