

By: Clerk to the Authority  
To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority - 13 June 2013  
Subject: PROPOSED CHANGES TO COMMITTEE STRUCTURE  
Classification: Unrestricted

## FOR DECISION

### SUMMARY

To consider changing the Authority's Committee structure by merging the Audit and Governance and Human Resources and Equalities Committees into a new General Purposes Committee, together with the introduction of a new Members' Bulletin designed to reduce the number of 'For Information' items appearing on Authority and Committee agendas, and to agree a revised Calendar of Meetings for 2013/14 to reflect the changed Committee structure.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to approve that:

- 1 the Audit and Governance Committee and the Human Resources and Equalities Committee be merged into a new General Purposes Committee, with Terms of Reference as attached at **Appendix 1** (paragraph 3(a) refers);
- 2 no changes be made to the 'Guidance on Issues to be Considered by the Authority', or the Terms of Reference of the Planning and Performance Committee; the Senior Officer Appointment and Conditions Committee; or Hearings Panels (paragraph 3(b) and **Appendices 2-5** refer),
- 3 a Members' Bulletin be introduced, to be circulated to Members on a regular basis, with a view to reducing the number of 'For Information' items appearing on Authority and Committee agendas (paragraph 3(d) refers);
- 4 the Planning and Performance Committee and the new General Purposes Committee each continue to meet three times each year in accordance with the revised Calendar of Meetings for 2013/14 attached at **Appendix 6** (paragraphs 3(c) and 5 refer).

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Clerk to the Authority - Stuart Ballard

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01622 692121 x8206

EMAIL: stuart.ballard@kent.fire-uk.org

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

## COMMENTS

### Background

1. Since 2006, the Authority has had three main Committees, with powers delegated from the Authority to take decisions on matters falling within their subject areas. These Committees are Audit and Governance; Planning and Performance (both of which meet three times each year); and Human Resources and Equalities (which meets twice a year). The Authority also has a Senior Officer Appointment and Conditions Committee, which meets as and when necessary, and provision for Hearings Panels to meet to consider allegations of breach of the Code of Conduct by Members, and staff disciplinary appeals.

### Proposed Changes to Committee Structure

2. As the Authority has matured, it has gradually become clear that there are now insufficient decisions to justify continuing with three main Committees. Members who have served on the Authority previously will have noted that most Committee meetings last a relatively short time, and that a large part of many agendas is made up of 'For Information' reports. As a result, the current Committee structure does not make the best use of Members' time.
3. To deal with this problem, it is proposed that:-
  - (a) the Audit and Governance Committee and the Human Resources and Equalities Committee should be merged into a new General Purposes Committee, which will meet three times a year. The proposed Terms of Reference of the new Committee (which combine the Terms of Reference of the two predecessor Committees, with no additions or deletions) are attached at **Appendix 1** for Members' approval;
  - (b) no changes be made to the 'Guidance on Issues to be Considered by the Authority', or the Terms of Reference of the Planning and Performance Committee; the Senior Officer Appointment and Conditions Committee; or Hearings Panel. These documents are attached at **Appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5** respectively for Members' information.
  - (c) the Planning and Performance Committee continue to meet three times each year, and meetings of the Senior Officer Appointment and Conditions Committee, and Hearings Panels, continue to be called as and when necessary;
  - (d) a Members' Bulletin be introduced, to be circulated to Members on a regular basis, with a view to reducing the number of 'For Information' items appearing on Authority and Committee agendas. The Members' Bulletin will be

circulated in electronic format, although it will be available in hard copy format on request.

4. It should be emphasised that these proposed changes are not intended to reduce Members' involvement in decision-making in any way. Instead, they are designed to make the best use of Members' time by ensuring that meetings focus on those issues where decisions are required, and are not padded out with items which are for information only.

### **Calendar of Meetings**

5. If adopted, the proposals in this report will require amendments to be made in the Calendar of Meetings for 2013/14 adopted by the Authority in December 2012 (Minute 34). A suggested amended Calendar of Meetings is attached at **Appendix 6** for Members' approval.

### **IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

6. The proposals in this report are intended to improve the efficiency of the Authority's decision-making processes, but there are no direct resource implications.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7. Members are requested to approve that:
  - 7.1 the Audit and Governance Committee and the Human Resources and Equalities Committee be merged into a new General Purposes Committee, with Terms of Reference as attached at **Appendix 1** (paragraph 3(a) refers);
  - 7.2 no changes be made to the 'Guidance on Issues to be Considered by the Authority', or the Terms of Reference of the Planning and Performance Committee; the Senior Officer Appointment and Conditions Committee; or Hearings Panels (paragraph 3(b) and **Appendices 2-5** refer),
  - 7.3 a Members' Bulletin be introduced, to be circulated to Members on a regular basis, with a view to reducing the number of 'For Information' items appearing on Authority and Committee agendas (paragraph 3(d) refers);
  - 7.4 the Planning and Performance Committee and the new General Purposes Committee each continue to meet three times each year in accordance with the revised Calendar of Meetings for 2013/14 attached at **Appendix 6** (paragraphs 3(c) and 5 refer).