

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 25th MARCH 2010

JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEE - UPDATE

REPORT OF HEAD OF GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING OFFICER

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek permission from the Standards Committee to put arrangements for a Joint Standards Committee on hold and to recruit an independent member to replace the Chairman of the Standards Committee

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That work to develop a Joint Standards Committee with the Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority is put on hold and

2.2 That the Committee instruct the Monitoring Officer to commence a recruitment process for a new independent member of the Standards Committee.

3. SUMMARY

The Standards Committee had asked Officers to look into the possibility of setting up a Joint Standards Committee with the Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority. Further work has been undertaken but officers are now suggesting that the matter is put on hold at present. Consequently officers are also asking that the vacancy about to be created by the Chairman of the Standards Committee is filled by way of a recruitment process for a new independent member of the Committee.

4. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Standards Committee – 18 June 2009, 17 September 2009

5. INFORMATION

5.1 On the 17 September 2009 this Committee considered a report from the Head of Governance & Monitoring Officer (then Head of Legal Services) and agreed that the Committee should look into the possibility

of establishing a Joint Standards Committee with Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority.

Following consideration of that report the matter was similarly considered by the Standards Committee at Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority who were also in agreement that a Joint Standards Committee should be explored. That Committee also asked that Shropshire Council should also be approached to see whether they would be prepared to take part in the Joint Standards Committee arrangements.

Some initial work was undertaken including speaking to Shropshire Council who were unable to provide a commitment to the Joint Standards Committee process at this stage. Officers have considered the further work that needs to be undertaken in order to establish a Joint Standards Committee within the time scales originally set out and the potential benefits that it may bring in the short term. Officers are now of the view that it would take significant amount of resources to set up a Standards Committee and that it would be difficult to allocate such resources to this project at the current time.

Accordingly Officers seek permission from the Committee to put further work in respect of establishing a Joint Standards Committee on hold for the time being and set the matter for review later on in the next Municipal year. Due to the potential for a combined Joint Standards Committee, work has not been undertaken to recruit a vacancy which is due to be created as a result of the Chairman standing down following completion of his two terms of office. In order to ensure that the full compliment of independent members of the Standards Committee is maintained, officers request that the Committee instruct the Monitoring Officer to commence a recruitment process for a new independent member of the Committee.

5.2 Equality and Diversity

If the Committee agree to commence a recruitment process for a new independent member of the Standards Committee the Monitoring Officer will ensure that the process complies with all relevant equality and diversity legislation requirements

5.3 Environmental Impact

None

5.4 Legal Comments

The provision for a Joint Standards Committee is set out in the Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009 ("the Regulations"). Part of the regulations allow for a Joint Standards Committee to be set up in accordance with provisions set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement and Health Act 2007.

Entering into Joint Standards Committee arrangements is optional and is not a mandatory requirement. There is also no time limit as to when a Joint Standards Committee has to be established. Accordingly, unless there is any change in the aforementioned regulations and primary legislation, this is a matter which can be returned to at a later date.

5.5 Links with Corporate Priorities

Ensuring that the Standards Committee considers options in relation to joint arrangements and also maintains the appropriate level of independent members for the Standards Committee assists the council in its aim to be efficient and effective when undertaking statutory duties.

5.6 Opportunities and Risks

The potential risks of not proceeding with Joint Standards Committee arrangements have been assessed and will be minimised.

5.7 Financial Implications

A budget is in place for the payment of special responsibility allowances to members who sit on the Standards Committee. The recruitment of a new independent member for the Standards Committee will be met from this budget.

5.8 Ward Implications

District wide implications

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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