



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Item 10

MEETING	Policy and resources
DATE OF MEETING	14 January 2016
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Future Arrangements for the Monitoring Officer Role and Democratic Support
STATUS OF REPORT	For open publication
PURPOSE OF REPORT	For consideration
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This report provides an overview of the arrangements associated with the role of the Monitoring Officer and Democratic Support for the new Authority and Service. The substance of this report and a draft Service Level Agreement has been reviewed by Members at their workstream meeting on the 17 November 2015. Contact details and other useful information to support Members and senior officers in the new democratic arrangements will be reflected in the Members' handbook.
RISK ASSESSMENT	Failure to put in place adequate arrangements will undermine the good governance of the new Authority and Service
COMMUNITY IMPACT	None for the purposes of this report.
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	The costs associated with these functions have been incorporated within the medium term finance plan to be considered by Members at their February meeting.
RECOMMENDATIONS	It is recommended that Members note and comment upon the contents of this report.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	Governance associated with the new Combined Fire Authority - Report to the Shadow Authority 23 October 2015, Chief Fire Officer and Clerk to the Authority. Democratic and legal arrangements report to Workstream 1 working group - 17 November 2015.
APPENDICES	None
REPORT ORIGINATOR	Derek James, Assistant Chief Officer and Corporate Services Director (designate)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report outlines the proposed arrangements for the Monitoring Officer and Democratic Support for the new Authority and Service.

2. Current Position

- 2.1 The Wiltshire and Swindon CFA currently have the following arrangements:

- ◆ A monitoring officer is provided through a Service Level Agreement with Swindon Borough Council.
- ◆ A temporary internal Clerk who, with administrative support, provides the democratic support for the Authority and its associated committees.
- ◆ Legal services are provided through a Service Level Agreement with Swindon Borough Council.

- 2.2 The Dorset Fire Authority have:

- ◆ Outsourced the functions provided by the Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services to Dorset County Council.
- ◆ A service level agreement exists between the Authority and Dorset County Council that also covers a range of additional functions such as treasury and exchequer management and legal services.

3. Monitoring Officer and Legal Advisory Services

- 3.1 On 4 June 2015, and following discussions with Chief Executives for Dorset, Wiltshire and Swindon unitary councils, the then Joint Committee discussed the appointment of the Monitoring Officer that would support the shadow period and undertake the role for the new Authority from 1 April 2016. Since Stephen Taylor had been given additional responsibilities by Swindon Borough Council, it was agreed that Jonathan Mair, Head of Legal and Democratic Services for Dorset County Council, would be slotted into the role of Monitoring Officer.

- 3.2 Following this appointment and the development of the initial governance arrangements, a draft Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been developed for both the role of Monitoring Officer and for the provision legal advisory services. This SLA has been reviewed by Members at their workstream meeting held on the 17 November 2015. As well as providing general support to Members and senior officers, the agreement covers supporting and attending:

- ◆ Dorset and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority (x 6)
- ◆ Finance and Audit Committee (x4)
- ◆ Policy and Resources committee (x 4)

- 3.3 It does not cover attendance at Local performance and Scrutiny Committees (x16). The SLA assumes one annual meeting to support the CFO's annual appraisal, one meeting for

the Brigade Managers' annual Gold Book review and one meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).

- 3.4 A financial allowance of £25,000 for the Monitoring Officer has been incorporated within revenue budgets for the new Authority. The SLA will be monitored during 2016/17 and reviewed at part of the wider review of initial governance currently under discussion by Members.

4. Clerk and Democratic Support

- 4.1 As previously indicated, the existing Authorities have differing approaches to achieving the administration and management of key meetings. Dorset has outsourced this function to Dorset County Council and Wiltshire has a Clerk with some administrative provision.
- 4.2 As Members are aware, the headquarters for the new Service is being configured to host all Authority meetings and Member seminars. It will also be the principal venue for all strategic meetings for the new Service. To this end, key senior officers are to be contractually located at Salisbury, including the officers supporting the democratic services function and the Strategic Leadership Team.
- 4.3 As part of the functional review associated with the delivering the business case savings, the agreed officer structure has a democratic services officer supported by an administrator (figure 1). The officer will develop close working relationship with the democratic services functions within each constituent authority.

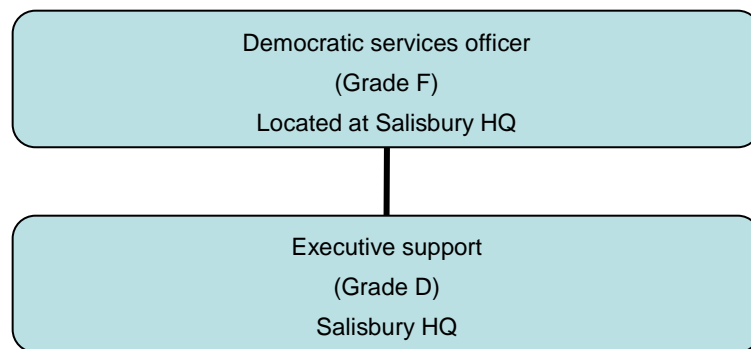


Figure 1: Staffing structure to support democratic services

- 4.4 The democratic services officer will establish and administer the corporate calendar and support both Member and officer led meetings. In particular they will be required to:
 - ◆ Support and administer meetings of the Fire Authority and associated committees, liaising with the Chair/Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer over the preparation of agendas and minutes and the programming of future work.
 - ◆ Undertake agenda planning and preparation, ensuring that all matters requiring attention by the Chairman or Authority, Members and the Chief Fire Officer are brought forward for decision at the appropriate time and that all such agendas and reports comply with corporate standards.

- ◆ Prepare clear and accurate agendas, minutes, decision notices and reports for meetings of the Fire Authority and in accordance with the statutory requirements and to publish appropriate notices.
- ◆ Assist with making arrangements for seminars and Member training events, including Member review meetings and recording outcomes and actions as required.
- ◆ Maintaining arrangements such as public registers of interest (eg disclosable pecuniary interests) as directed by the Monitoring Officer.
- ◆ Assisting with Members allowances and publication and travel and subsistence payments.
- ◆ Assist Members with any additional requirements that may emerge such as arranging for Member induction and development reviews.

4.5 In addition to supporting Members, the role will also support senior officers and the Strategic Leadership Team in the management of weekly, monthly and ad hoc meetings to deliver the Community Safety Plan and associated delivery plans.

4.6 In addition to assisting Members and senior officers, the administrative support will support the Democratic Services Officer and provide administrative support to senior officers and other departments such as health and safety. As well as providing a wider and focused role in supporting Members, senior officers and departments, the savings for the democratic and monitoring roles will be £12,700 compared to the separate existing arrangements.

4.7 In general terms, it is therefore envisaged that the Monitoring Officer will ensure that all arrangements and formal meetings of the Authority and its sub-committees are correctly and properly constituted. This will include supporting Members with such functions as their declarations of interest, ensuring that standing orders are complied with, and those meetings are convened and conducted in accordance with statutory requirements. The Democratic Services Officer will work within these legal parameters and practices to ensure sound administration and management of the meetings.

4.8 Although the Authority is not legally required to appoint a Clerk, for the sake of public clarity, it may be that the Monitoring Officer is referred to as the Clerk and Monitoring Officer.

4.9 In readiness for 1 April 2016, all of the detailed arrangements to support Members will be set out in a Members' Handbook and made available via the Service's website.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The arrangements to support the new Authority and Service are being developed and financially budgeted for within the emerging medium term finance plan. Members are currently discussing the initial governance arrangements for the new Authority with a view to reviewing them to ensure efficient and effective governance arrangements are in place. The Service Level Agreement will need to form part of this wider review.