



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Item 21/27

MEETING	Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority
DATE OF MEETING	16 June 2021
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Proposed changes to the Members Handbook
STATUS OF REPORT	For open publication
PURPOSE OF REPORT	To note and approve
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>In advance of the Annual General Meeting, the content of the Members Handbook has been reviewed to ensure good governance is maintained. Amendments are proposed which seek to update these main areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General updates to Officer roles, meeting dates and Members' details. 2. Level of financial delegation and subsequential decision making changes in the Scheme of Delegation to Officers. 3. Financial Regulations aligned to this delegation. 4. Standing Orders to clarify the process for public questions at all Authority meetings. 5. Members' Code of Conduct to reflect the Local Government Association model as approved at the Authority meeting on 9 February 2021. 6. Contract Standing Orders to remove reference to EU procurement regulations.
RISK ASSESSMENT	The proposals for amendment ensure the Authority is maintaining good governance and efficient decision-making arrangements.

COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	None for the purposes of this report
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	None for the purposes of this report
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>Members are asked to note these amendments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General updates. 2. Code of Conduct updated to reflect the Local Government Association model. 3. Contract and Procurement Standing Orders to remove reference to EU procurement regulations. 4. Online handbook to be updated and referencing simplified into one single document. <p>Members are asked to approve these proposed amendments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Scheme of Delegation to Officers to increase the financial delegation to Officers to £250,000 from £100,000 and consequential changes to align to the terms of reference for Local Performance and Scrutiny Committees and to demonstrate the anticipated outcomes of the White Paper on Fire Reform with regards to operational independence. 6. Financial Regulations aligned to the financial delegation. 7. Standing Orders to clarify the process for public questions at all Authority meetings.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	LGA Model Code of Conduct
APPENDIX	None
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	<p>Name: Jonathan Mair, Clerk & Monitoring Officer Email: Jonathan.mair@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Tel no: 01305 224181 and Name: Ian Cotter, Treasurer Email: ian.cotter@dwfire.org.uk Tel no: 01722 691109</p>

1. Introduction

1.1 In advance of the Annual General meeting, the content of the Members Handbook has been reviewed to ensure the Authority maintains good governance and has the appropriate financial limits reflective of the Authority budget. In consultation with the Clerk & Monitoring Officer and Treasurer, the proposed amendments seek to update these main areas:

- General administration updates to Officer roles, meeting dates and Members' details
- Level of financial delegation and operational independence in the Scheme of Delegation to Officers
- Financial Regulations aligned to this delegation
- Standing Orders to clarify the process for public questions at all Authority meetings
- Members' Code of Conduct to reflect the Local Government Association (LGA) model as approved at the Authority meeting on 9 February 2021
- Contract and Procurement Standing Orders to remove reference to EU procurement regulations
- Simplifying the referencing on the electronic handbook.

2. Scheme of Delegation to Officers

2.1 The Clerk & Monitoring Officer and the Treasurer are proposing that paragraph 4.3 of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers is amended to increase the financial delegation from £100,000 to £250,000. The current limit reflects a carryover from the legacy Services at point of Combination. The new limit is considered more appropriate for the Authority as it is now and the size of its budget. The paragraph is suggested to now read:

4.3 If authority to act has been reserved to the full Authority or a committee the Officer may exercise delegated authority in relation to that matter without approval of the Authority or committee. This limitation includes the ability to make key decisions. A key decision is one which has financial implications in excess of current provision, for the Authority of more than £250,000.

2.2 It is also proposed that existing paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers are combined to provide better alignment to the terms of reference for the Local Performance and Scrutiny Committees, following their revision as part of the positive LGA peer review. The amendment clarifies and simplifies the consultation arrangements for referring significant policy changes to the Authority and also helps to future proof the scheme of delegation with the anticipated outcomes of the White Paper on Fire Reform with regards to operational independence. The paragraph is suggested to now read:

4.4 *Before exercising any delegated power, officers must consider whether the decision to be made is of such a nature that it ought to be referred for a collective decision by the full Authority. Through the Chief Fire Officer clear communication must be maintained with the Chair of the Authority. To help decide if this decision may require referral to the full Authority, the Chair of the Authority may liaise with the appropriate Chair of the Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee in making this determination.*

3. Financial Regulations

3.1 It is proposed that paragraph A16 of the Financial Regulations is amended to increase the virement limit of the Chief Fire Officer without approval from £100,000 to £250,000 in line with the change in delegations to officers referred to above.

3.2 It is proposed that paragraph A17 of the Financial Regulations is amended to increase the limit for money to be transferred from another budget head from £25,000 to £50,000 with written approval of the Treasurer. This will now read:

A17 Enough money can be transferred from another budget head (virement) and for amounts in excess of £50,000 the transfer is given prior written approval by the Treasurer.

3.3 It is proposed that minor adjustments are made to paragraphs A21-23 of the Financial Regulations to debt write off, write off of redundant stock and stock adjustments. Each limit to be increased by £5,000 and these paragraphs will now read:

A21 The Chief Fire Officer is authorised to write off debts, redundant stock and stock adjustments up to and including the value of £10,000 personally.

A22 Debts and/or redundant stock and/or stock adjustments above £10,000 but not exceeding £25,000 can be written off by the Chief Fire Officer subject to written approval of the Treasurer and the Clerk & Monitoring Officer.

A23 Debts and/or redundant stock and/or stock adjustments in excess of £25,000 require the approval of the Authority to be written off.

3.4 It is proposed that paragraph B10 of the Financial Regulations is amended to increase the amount that the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair, may approve an increase over the Capital programme, from £100,000 to £250,000. This is in line with the amendment proposed to the financial delegations. This paragraph will now read:

B10 The Chief Fire Officer and the Treasurer may approve an increase in the capital programme of £50,000, and the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer in consultation with the Chair of the Authority may approve an increase of up to £250,000. In both cases the approved expenditure must be reported to the Authority.

- 3.5 It is proposed that a new paragraph is added to the Financial Regulations for Urgent Decisions to read:

B12 Where an urgent financial decision is required that falls outside of the defined process or limits within Financial Regulations but is felt to be in the wider interests of the Authority, the Treasurer in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer, Clerk & Monitoring Officer and Chair of the Authority can make the decision subject to it being reported back to the Authority.

4. Standing Orders

- 4.1 It is proposed that paragraphs 40.1-4 of the Standing Orders are amended to clarify the inclusion of questions from members of the public as well as deputations at all Authority meetings. This is in line with Local Authority Standing Orders and the paragraphs will read:

40.1 Questions from members of the public and deputations wishing to be received by the Authority, a Committee or Sub-Committee shall submit a request in writing to the Clerk & Monitoring Officer three clear working days prior to the meeting.

40.2 A deputation invited to a meeting shall not exceed five in number and only two of its members shall be at liberty to address the meeting. At any one meeting no person or organisation may present or participate in more than one deputation.

40.3 The time allowed to all questions or deputations to the Authority, Committee or Sub-Committee shall not exceed 15 minutes in total unless the Chair agrees a longer period.

40.4 At any one meeting, no person or organisation may ask more than two questions in total during public participation time.

40.5 The Chair will consult with the Clerk & Monitoring Officer to decide the most appropriate Member to reply to any public question or deputation.

5. Summary

- 5.1 Subject to Member's' approval these amendments will be updated on the electronic handbook available on the Service's website.
- 5.2 The Chair and Chief Fire Officer will ensure all new Authority Members are aware of the revised handbook through the programmed induction process.

June 2021