

report

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	
date	29 July 2005	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

PROTOCOL FOR QUESTIONS TO THE AUTHORITY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present to Members a proposed protocol for the asking of questions at Fire & Rescue Authority and Fire & Rescue Authority Committee Meetings.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Within the current Standing Orders relating to Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority, there is no formal process detailed for the asking of questions at meetings of the Fire & Rescue Authority nor any of its proposed committees.

2.2 Unlike other Fire & Rescue Authorities, Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority has always responded to questions tabled at its meetings, however, these questions are often without structure, not directly related to the papers tabled and as a consequence do not receive the response they deserve.

3. REPORT

3.1 Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority respects the views of its Members and stakeholders in the conduct of its business, and seeks to operate in an open and transparent manner. However, to ensure that the Fire Authority can deal with its business in an efficient and effective manner, a procedure for the tabling of questions at Fire & Rescue Authority and associated committee meetings is required.

3.2 The tabling of questions in any manner, written or verbal, is not a regular process. A poll of other Fire & Rescue Authorities details that the questioning of Fire & Rescue Authority Members in any manner is restricted.

3.3 By adopting the procedure attached at Appendix A, Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority is of the opinion that it will be able to respond to questions in a formal and structured manner, within a process that will ensure the longevity of the openness by which the Authority operates and will retain the concept of the inclusivity of the Fire & Rescue Authority.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The opportunity to table questions to the Fire & Rescue Authority, within the protocol outlined, will apply equally to Officers of recognised Trade Unions and primary Stakeholders.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The proposed protocol will ensure a balance is maintained between meeting the expectations of its stakeholders and the need to conduct its business in a professional, efficient and effective manner.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members approve the attached protocol and approve its inclusion in a proposed revision to the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority Standing Orders.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION

None.

Paul Woods
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

PROPOSED PROTOCOL

FOR THE

ASKING OF

QUESTIONS

AT

FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

AND

FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE MEETINGS

PROTOCOL FOR QUESTIONS TO THE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY AND FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority operating in an open and transparent way respects the right of individuals to raise questions of the decision making process.

To ensure that such questions are dealt with appropriately, the following protocol shall be incorporated into the Standing Orders of the Fire & Rescue Authority.

1. If an Officer of a recognised Trade Union or another primary stakeholder (see Appendix A) wishes to ask a question at a meeting of the Fire & Rescue Authority in relation to published papers to be discussed at its meeting they shall give notice in writing to the proper office at least FIVE working days before the meeting at which the question is to be asked.
2. Questions shall be circulated by the Clerk to Members of the Fire & Rescue Authority at, or before, the meeting at which they are to be asked.
3. Every question shall be tabled without discussion and read out prior to the agenda item it refers to. The Chair of the Authority will determine if the question will be responded to and the manner in which it will be dealt with.
4. An answer to a question may be given by the person to whom it is addressed or by a person on their behalf and may take the form of,
 - i. an oral answer;
 - ii. reference to information contained in some publication;
 - iii. a written answer.
5. No supplementary questions will be permitted. Response will only given directly to the question tabled.
6. The Chair has the right to determine if a question is to be responded to and will therefore refuse a question if he thinks it necessary.
7. A time limit of ten minutes will be allowed if the question is asked verbally.

Representative Bodies:-

Fire Brigades Union
Unison
Retained Firefighters Union
Fire Officers Association
Association of principal Fire Officers

Primary Stakeholders:-

Local Authorities - (City, County, District)
Primary Care Trusts
Voluntary Sector
Police
Ambulance
Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs)
Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)
Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs)