



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Policy and Strategy Committee

GOVERNANCE MONITORING

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 29 October 2010

Purpose of Report:

To present to Policy and Strategy Committee further information and options relating to Member attendance at Committee and other meetings.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As part of its response to the first Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process for Fire and Rescue Authorities, and in a bid to improve their own engagement with the Service, Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority undertook a fundamental review of the Governance arrangements during 2005. In conjunction with the review an independent panel was convened to look at the structure and associated allowances for Members. This ensured that the proposals for revised Governance were robust in all areas.
- 1.2 Following its meeting of the 7 September 2007, the Authority tasked Policy and Strategy Committee with the responsibility for Member Development. Attendance at Committee meetings is seen as a key part of that process ensuring Authority Members remain informed as to the Service's progress and actions.
- 1.3 The Authority introduced its revised governance arrangements on 1 April 2006. This saw the implementation of a number of Committees and a reduction in the number of meetings of the full Fire and Rescue Authority. In summary the following Committees were established:

COMMITTEE	MEETING FREQUENCY
Fire & Rescue Authority	5 times per year
Policy & Strategy Committee	Quarterly
Human Resources Committee	Quarterly
Finance & Resources Committee	Quarterly
Community Safety Committee	Quarterly
Performance Monitoring Committee	Quarterly
Standards Committee	At least annually
Appointments Committee	As required
Personnel Committee	As required

- 1.4 In November 2007, the Policy and Strategy Committee received a report detailing the attendance by Members at the various Committees. This covered the period up to December 2007.
- 1.5 At its meeting of 30 July 2010, the Policy and Strategy Committee considered a further report on governance from the Chief Fire Officer (CFO). As an outcome, the CFO was tasked with submitting a further

report relating to attendance where this fell below 70% and exploring options to improve the figures.

2. REPORT

2.1 Overall, attendance by Members at Committee and other such events is high. This is important as the Committee structure put in place ensures that the business of the Fire Authority is carried out in an effective and efficient manner. Failure to attend presents the potential for Committees to become inquorate and if this occurs, the submissions cannot be agreed.

2.2 Although the Fire Authority identifies a 70% attendance ratio as its benchmark, in most cases this is met, with only three Committees sharing data below this level. These are:

Human Resources Committee	67%
Performance Monitoring Committee	67%
Personnel Committee	68%

Additionally, Member seminar events attract an attendance rate of 61%.

2.3 In respect of Members' individual attendance, only seven of the eighteen Members of the Fire Authority have an attendance of below 70% and of these seven, only five have averages of below 50%. This must be taken into context where some Committees have only met once or twice in the last twelve months (Personnel Committee) and unavailability at one meeting automatically places the Member with a below 70% attendance.

2.4 As an outcome of the Policy and Strategy Committee meeting on 30 July 2010, the CFO was tasked with wiring to all Members advising them of their individual attendance. This has been done, so that all are now aware of their ratios.

2.5 It must also be considered that Fire Authority Members are also City and County councillors who have other Council duties to carry out. It must be noted that during the current civic year the Fire Authority has the Mayor of Nottingham, Sheriff of Nottingham and the Chairman of the County Council amongst its Members. Such roles place a huge burden on the individuals and are bound to have an effect on attendance at Fire Authority business. It is a credit to those concerned that they continue to support the Fire Authority throughout their civic year.

2.6 Even so, it is vitally important that the Authority continues to meet its statutory obligations and being quorate is essential, particularly under the financial climate at present, where key decisions may have to be taken at all of the Fire Authority Committees.

2.7 Key aspects that may serve to promote this could be as follows:

- The CFO writes individually to all Members advising them of their attendance on an annual basis.
- That clear advance notice for Fire Authority meetings and Members' seminars is given. Where possible, this should be of a minimum six months notice, preferably 12 months.
- That Policy and Strategy Committee continue to receive an annual report on overall attendance.
- Under exceptional circumstances, that where Members cannot attend a Committee, they advise the Clerk to the Fire Authority who will contact the lead group Member and they attempt to arrange a substitute Member so that the Committee remains quorate.
- That Members accept that on occasion they may be contacted by the Clerk to act as a substitute to ensure the Committee remains quorate.

2.8 It is considered that by implementing the options given in 2.7 above, that the correct level of encouragement and scrutiny will be applied so that the Fire Authority will continue to meet its targeted expectations with regard to Member attendance and that the business of the Fire Authority will continue to be delivered.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications arising from this report were addressed as part of a review of Members' allowances which formed part of the revised governance arrangements. The recommendations from that review have been implemented.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

Although there are no specific human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report, all Committee work addresses such impact through its meeting schedule. This ensures all reports cover any issues which may be related to the individual Committee's work.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An equality impact assessment is not required in relation to this report.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The revised governance structure and Authority commitment to that structure has resulted in improved knowledge, continuity and engagement between Members and Officers. This ensures that the Service meets its obligations under external scrutiny processes and reduces the risk of ministerial intervention.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 9.1 Note that the Chief Fire Officer has written, as instructed, to individual Fire Authority Members advising them of their personal attendance.
- 9.2 Agree the actions as given in Paragraph 2.7 as a way of maintaining and improving Member attendance and at Fire Authority committees and seminars.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER