

**TO:** Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

**FROM:** Democratic Services Manager

**DATE:** 12<sup>th</sup> July 2007

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## **STANDING ORDERS AS TO MEETINGS - CHAIRMAN**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To consider the terminology to be used in referring to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman in the Fire Authority's Standing Orders as to Meetings and other documents.

### **2. Recommendation**

That references to "Chairman" and "Vice Chairman" in the Fire Authority's Standing Orders as to Meetings and other documents be replaced by "Chair" and "Vice-Chair".

### **3. Risk Assessment**

- 3.1 Political – The terminology to be used in the Fire Authority's documents is basically a matter of choice. The choice however does have some significance for the Authority's current commitment to promoting equality and reflects, to some extent, the values of the Fire Authority. It may also impact on the perception of others looking to the Authority for leadership, both within the service and outside.

### **4. Background**

- 4.1 The Authority's current Standing Orders as to Meetings refer to "Chairman" and "Vice-Chairman" throughout the document. Members will be aware that references to "Fireman" were formally replaced by "Firefighter" in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, reflecting that the role could be performed by a man or woman and the commitment to equal opportunities.
- 4.2 Practice elsewhere varies. Some local and fire authorities have adopted the use of Chair and Vice Chair whilst others have retained the traditional terms of Chairman and Vice Chairman. The main argument cited in favour of the use of Chairman is that it is a term referring to a position which can be fulfilled by a person of either gender although it could be perceived as a discouragement to women. Conversely the main argument in favour of Chair is that it is gender neutral and carries no assumptions about the post being performed by a man or woman.

- 4.3 Comments have been made that the Fire Authority in its documents should adopt gender neutral terminology as part of the overall drive of the service to become more diverse and inclusive. The new Chairman of the Fire Authority is persuaded that use of Chair and Vice Chair would have benefits in demonstrating the Authority's commitment to becoming more inclusive.
- 4.4 Members of the Fire Authority have been consulted informally about the proposed change. The majority of those replying were supportive of the change. Some were indifferent and were happy to go along with the majority. A minority wished to retain the use of Chairman and Vice Chairman. The matter has been referred to the Fire Authority for decision with the recommendation for change reflecting the views of the majority of members replying.

## 5. Implementation

- 5.1 There are no financial costs associated with the change. Standing Orders as to Meetings have been amended in other areas and will need to be reprinted in any event. Other documents will be updated as and when the need arises. However, to avoid confusion, the consistent application of the policy is recommended, notwithstanding the preferences of individual members.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	Location	Contact
Standing Orders as to Meetings	Hinchingbrooke Cottage Brampton Road Huntingdon	Michael Brown 01480 444572 <a href="mailto:michael.brown@cambsfire.gov.uk">michael.brown@cambsfire.gov.uk</a>