

WMFRA

Members of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA)

WMFRA has 27 councillors which govern the Authority. The Authority's core business is about:

- assessing the risks posed to communities;
- being proactive in preventing fires and other risks, rather than simply reacting to fires;
- working with the most vulnerable in society and those less able to make themselves safe from or respond to a fire when it does occur;
- working closely with communities to decide on and implement the best approaches to community fire safety;
- delivering value for money; and
- high standards of conduct being promoted.

High standards of conduct ensure that there is greater public confidence in what the Authority does. The 10 general principles of conduct for Members are:

- Selflessness;
- Honesty and integrity;
- Objectivity;
- Accountability;
- Openness;
- Personal judgment;
- Respect for others;
- Duty to uphold the law;
- Stewardship; and
- Leadership

In addition all Councillors and co-opted Members of the Authority are subject to the Members' Code of Conduct.

If you are unhappy with the conduct of a WMFRA Member you may complain to the Authority's Standards Committee. In this leaflet 'Member' means any of the following people:

- An elected Councillor
- An appointed Member of the Authority's committee (including Members of the Standards Committee) or
- A co-opted Member of the Authority's committee.

The Standards Committee is a group of people appointed by the Authority to help maintain and promote high ethical standards. It is made up of elected Councillors and independent people who are not Councillors or employees of the Authority but who are appointed by the Authority.

Members' Code of Conduct

Members are required to comply with the standards set out in the Authority's Member Code of Conduct (which is part of the Authority's Constitution). The Standards Committee can only deal with complaints that a Member has not complied with the Code of Conduct. The full Code of Conduct is available on the Authority's website at:

www.wmfs.net/Your_Fire_Service/Fire_Authority/Ethical_Framework_For_Members/

or you can obtain a paper copy by contacting the Authority (see the contact details at the end of this leaflet). The Code of Conduct includes requirements:

- To treat people with respect (including not bullying or intimidating people)
- To comply with the Equalities Acts
- Not to disclose confidential information
- Not to bring the Authority into disrepute
- Not to abuse their position for their own (or someone else's) advantage or disadvantage
- To disclose certain personal and financial interests

Members must also act lawfully in their personal and public capacities.

The Standards Committee cannot look into complaints that are about:

- Political and policy decisions i.e. if you simply disagree with a decision that has been made
- People employed by the Authority
- Incidents that happened before a Member was elected or chosen to serve
- The way the Authority conducts or records its meetings
- The way the Authority has or has not done something.

In these cases, you could use the Authority's corporate complaints procedures. You can obtain information about this from the Authority's website at: www.wmfs.net/

Contact Us or by telephoning the Authority on **0121 380 7404**

You may also complain about some of these matters to the Local Government Ombudsman if you think that the Authority has been guilty of neglect, inattention, delay, incompetence etc.


How to complain and what happens to your complaint

If you make a complaint about Member misconduct to the Standards Committee it must be in writing. To ensure that your complaint is one that can be properly considered you should make your complaint on a form which is available from the

Monitoring Officer (see the contact details at the end of this leaflet). As well as the Complaint Form, information sent to you will explain to you how to complete the Form. You will have to say who the complaint is about and why you think that they have not followed the Code of Conduct.

With the Complaint Form you will receive information and guidance for potential complainants. This information includes :-

- How you should set out your complaint. Your complaint should be clearly set out on the Complaint Form summarising what you are complaining about and including supporting documentation where necessary. You should say who you are complaining about and why you think that they have not followed the Code of Conduct.
- Notice that the Member you are complaining about will be informed that you have complained about him or her and the relevant paragraphs of the Code of Conduct that it is alleged may have been breached.
- The referral criteria which the Assessment Sub-Committee of the Standards Committee will use to decide whether or not to refer your complaint for investigation or other action.

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- What happens once you submit your complaint – the Assessment Sub-Committee will meet to consider your complaint and decide whether it should be referred for investigation or other action. This will happen within an average of 20 working days of the date we receive your complaint.
 - The powers of the Assessment Sub-Committee which may decide to refer your complaint for other action instead of referring it for investigation. Other action may include options such as asking the person you have complained about to undergo training or conciliation.
 - When we will notify you of the Assessment Sub-Committee's decision and your right to ask for a review of the Assessment Sub-Committee's decision.

Contact Details

Monitoring Officer for West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

Mrs N Sharma

Sandwell MBC

Legal Services Division

Sandwell Council House

Oldbury

West Midlands B69 3DE

Telephone **0121 569 3172**

Email: **neeraj_sharma@sandwell.gov.uk**

NB: Sandwell MBC is the lead local authority supporting WMFRA and Neeraj Sharma is the statutory Monitoring Officer for both these authorities.