

BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE AUTHORITY

Report to: Audit & Corporate Governance Committee

Date: Tuesday 30th June 2009

Subject: Authority Standing Orders – Telephone and Video Conference Calls

Sponsor: Chief Executive & Clerk

For: Decision

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Authority adopted procedural Standing Orders as part of the Corporate Governance documentations. Annex 3 to the Corporate Governance documents contains those Standing Orders. Whilst the current Standing Orders do not preclude participation in meetings by telephone or video conferences, neither do they explicitly sanction this. Recently, members have wanted to contribute to discussions taking place in meetings, but have not been able to attend. This report therefore makes proposals to change Standing Orders to allow participation by way of a conference/video call.
- 1.2. Whilst clearly it is better for Members of meetings to be physically present, so that the discussion can take place in a dynamic way, there will be circumstances when Members will wish to make a contribution but cannot attend in person.

2. PROPOSES FOR CHANGES

- 2.1. I propose that a new Standing Order 12 be added to the section dealing with business at meetings, to read as follows:-

“12. Where any Member is unable to attend a meeting for which he is a Member, he may:

- i) send written comments on any items or reports to the Chief Executive & Clerk who will make them known to the Chairman of the Meeting and which may be relayed to the meeting when the item or report to which they relate are being discussed;*

ii) *participate in the meeting by way of a telephone or video link conference call, provided that at least 3 days notice has been given to the Chief Executive & Clerk of his intention to do so, and the Chairman of the meeting has agreed to this method of participation. Any such attendance will be counted for the purpose of recording any votes and shall be included in the numbers relating to the quorum of the meeting, as described in Standing Order 14”*

2.2. The number of days’ notice is arbitrary, but should be specified. Setting up a conference call can be achieved quickly; I suggest that some notice should be required, so that other members of the meeting are aware that this will happen, and the Chairman for the meeting agrees. The assumption is that each occasion will need to be agreed by the Chairman of the meeting. The dynamics of the discussion are different when participation is by conference call, and therefore specific approvals for each meeting is being suggested, rather than a blanket arrangement!

2.3. There will be subsequential re-numbering of subsequent Standing Orders to reflect the new Standing Order 12.

3. OTHER CHANGE

3.1. The other minor change that I propose relates to the despatch of agenda and supporting documents via email. Because some reports are restricted, the Secretariat cannot use unsecured email addresses and has to despatch papers in written form. This is why most agendas are now sent to Members in hard copy. I propose that, at the end of Standing Order 7, the following be inserted:

“Subject to the requirements to comply with the Government’s and Force’s protected marking scheme” thus the final sentence of that Standing Order will read:

“As far as possible, the agenda and supporting documents/papers will be despatched to Members via email, subject to the requirements to comply with the Government’s and Force’s Protective Marking Scheme, which in the main relate to papers marked “confidential”..

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1. I recommend that the Committee adopts these changes to Standing Orders and that this be agreed by the Authority.