

THE FIRE BRIGADE SOCIETY

SOCIETY REVIEW - UPDATE FEBRUARY 2017



Further positive progress has been made since the 2016 AGM report circulated with the minutes.

FINANCIAL WORKING PARTY

We have established a system of quarterly accounting reports to assist with the management of The Society, and budgetary controls. This will be particularly important as the previous revenue stream from the Sales Unit is currently no longer available. The categorisation of expenses continues to be refined, as do the parameters of what can and can't be claimed, and at what rate.

For sound budgetary control and forecasting, aligning The Society's activities, their associated income and spending, to The Society's financial year has been identified as an imperative. This will be in place from the start of the new financial year.

Running costs are being carefully analysed to ensure best value. Items under current scrutiny include our insurance cover, and banking charges. More competitive quotes for insurance are being sought, and a couple of possibilities for free banking are being pursued. It is hoped that all our recommendations will be able to be implemented from the start of the Society year on 1st April 2017.

MANAGEMENT WORKING PARTY

We continue to investigate the current and alternative structures for The Society. It is becoming increasingly clear, but not yet certain, that a management structure that deals direct with, and is driven democratically by the membership is the model that is most likely to address the concerns and satisfy the wishes of the members, as expressed in the President's Survey. We are continuing to work on these proposals, including benchmarking against our existing structure, comparable interest groups, and similar organisations. Paramount in the considerations is that it is not the aim to reduce the 'benefits' of membership, but hopefully 'enhance' them.

On a parallel track, we continue to investigate the possibility of charitable status. To this end, we are in contact with several other specialist interest groups who have been granted, or are applying for such recognition, in order to ascertain whether it would be beneficial to The Society. Some of these organisations have been affected by similar issues to The Society; static or declining membership and income, and difficulty in filling management or officer roles. These contacts should also assist us in framing our application correctly, and avoiding any pitfalls in the process if this is the direction we wish to pursue. It is also believed that this interaction would help speed up such an application. Members should be assured that the option of charitable status would not in any way diminish the traditional Society aims and activities; visits, meetings, 'Fire Cover', etc.

Whichever route we take, we expect to propose changes to The Society Constitution. If we recommend the status quo, we anticipate that there will still be the need for an update to reflect the change in the size and activities of The Society since 2005. If the recommendation to the members encompasses a more radical set of proposals, then the changes are likely to be more fundamental. Once we have a firm direction of travel, we will be able to incorporate the necessary changes into a draft document. It should be noted that should charity status be sought, our constitution and activities will be subject to scrutiny from the Charity Commission.

One consideration raised by members, the methods by which communication with members is discharged, has already been embraced and electronic means, either email or the website, are being used for communications. As such this update will also be posted on the website.

We will continue to examine the alternatives over the next couple of months with the aim of putting a definitive set of proposals to the membership with the next edition of 'Fire Cover'.

Alan Field, Financial Working Party Lead and Richard Williams, Management Working Party Lead