

**THE HIGHLAND AND ISLANDS FIRE BOARD
25 AUGUST 2006**

**HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE &
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Introduction

Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service is committed to people in our large and diverse area having a greater say in how local services are planned and delivered. The effective engagement of local people is critical to the regeneration of our most disadvantaged communities and in planning how we can work together to reduce risk and make people safer. If local services are to better meet local needs and aspirations, local people need to be genuinely involved in developing these services. It is only by listening to the experiences and ideas of the people who live in these communities that we can find solutions which will make a lasting difference.

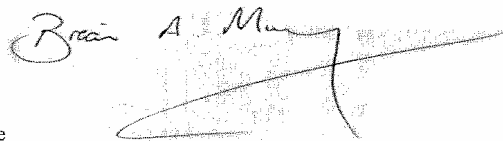
Whilst this Service has done much in recent times to engage the community in our decisions, particularly with regard to our integrated risk management plans, a recent Audit Scotland report¹ produced on behalf of the Accounts Commission found that in Scotland "*community engagement is progressing but it needs to be more sustained and systematic*"

There was therefore a need to review our community engagement efforts against the National Standards for Community Engagement. These standards were specifically developed to address a number of criticisms. However, they are also seen as part of the modernising government process that anticipates a cultural shift towards more participatory democracy

The attached document presents the outcome of the review of the national standards for community engagement and recommends that the Highlands and Islands Fire Board:

1. Develop, Publish and Circulate a Statement of Intent
2. Place Responsibilities for Managing Community Engagement within a Specific Function
3. Produce a Community Engagement Strategy and Policy
4. Appoint the Convener as Community Engagement Champion for the Fire Board

Recommendation:
Members are asked to note the contents of the report and agree the recommendations



Signature

Designation: Chief Fire Officer

Date: 10 August 2006

¹ Community planning: an initial review, Audit Scotland, June 2006