



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 10 July 2024 at Lecture Theatre - Fire Service Headquarters, Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ at 1.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Rob Polhill (Chair), Sherin Akhtar, David Brown, Peter Walker, Peter Wheeler, Sagheer Zaman, Razia Daniels and independent (non-elected) member Derek Barnett

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Recording of Meeting

Members were reminded that the meeting would be audio-recorded.

B Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rachel Bailey. Cllr Razia Daniels was in attendance as a substitute.

C Declarations of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

D Minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee held on Wednesday 17th April 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

E Appointment of Members of the Audit Committee for 2024-25

Members agreed the membership of the Audit Committee for 2024-25 as follows:

Councillors:	Peter Wheeler (Chair) Sherin Akhtar Rachel Bailey Sagheer Zaman
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Independent Audit Committee Member:	Suzanne Horrill
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2 DISPENSATION

The Director of Governance introduced the report which asked Members to extend the benefit of the existing dispensation to the new Members of the Fire Authority. This would allow them to take part in debates and votes on the approval of the

Members' Allowances Scheme (and any changes and/or additions to it).

He informed the Committee that Councillors Laura Crane, Mo Hussain, Phil Marshall, Phil Rimmer, Geoff Smith, Mick Warren and Sagheer Zaman had requested that the dispensation be extended so they could benefit from it.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the dispensation granted to Fire Authority Members on 30th January 2024 be extended to benefit Councillors Laura Crane, Mo Hussain, Phil Marshall, Phil Rimmer, Geoff Smith, Mick Warren and Sagheer Zaman, thereby allowing them to take part in debates and votes on the approval of the Members' Allowances Scheme (and any changes and/ or additions to it).

3 SUMMARY OF MEMBER ATTENDANCE 2023-24 MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Director of Governance introduced the report which provided information about Member attendance for the last Municipal Year. Appendix 1 to the report summarised Member Attendance at meetings of the Fire Authority and its main committees: Audit; Brigade Managers' Pay and Performance; Governance and Constitution; Performance and Overview; and Staffing. Appendix 2 to the report contained details of the additional meetings attended such as Member Planning Days, events, conferences and training and development sessions.

Members noted the attendance figures and decided that no action was necessary.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the summary of Member attendance for 2023-24 Municipal Year be noted.

4 COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Director of Governance introduced the report which provided information regarding compliments and complaints received about the Service during the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

He provided an overview of the figures for the five reporting periods which were presented within a table in the report. He covered some of the informal complaints which were attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Members commented on the compliments received which demonstrated the diverse services delivered and the professionalism of staff within the Service.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the information regarding compliments and complaints made during the period 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024 be noted.

5 WHISTLEBLOWING ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Director of Governance introduced the report which provided information about Whistleblowing for 2023-24. He advised that the Policy and Procedure had recently been reviewed by officers and the changes would be discussed in the next agenda item.

Members were informed that the Authority had been contacted three times. However, each instance did not pass the threshold for Whistleblowing. The Director highlighted the summary of the concerns raised with Safecall in Appendix 2 to the report.

A Member queried who made the decision as to whether a report made the threshold for whistleblowing. The Director of Governance advised that it was determined by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager and that further information on the policy was included in the next agenda item.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the content of the report be noted.

6 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Director of Governance introduced the report which sought to secure approval of a new Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure. He advised that the policy and procedure had been reviewed by officers following a recommendation from the last internal audit report concerned with Whistleblowing.

Members noted that the Whistleblowing Policy name had been changed to "Freedom to speak up" which was used within other organisations such as the NHS. They emphasised the importance of internal communications when sharing details of the name policy.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the content of the report be noted; and

[2] the Freedom to Speak Up (Whistleblowing) Policy and Procedure be approved.