



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 29 January 2020 at Lecture Theatre - Sadler Road, Cheshire at 10.15 am

PRESENT: Councillors Steve Wright (Chair), Michael Beanland (substitute for Rachel Bailey), Mike Biggin, David Brown, Martyn Delaney and Rob Polhill and independent (non-elected) members Derek Barnett and Lesley Thomson

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 Councillors Rachel Bailey and Nick Mannion. Councillor Beanland attended the meeting as a substitute for Councillor Rachel Bailey.

C Declarations of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interest.

D Minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee held on Wednesday 13th November 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 DISPENSATIONS

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which enabled Members to consider the granting of dispensations to allow Members with Disclosable Pecuniary Interests to participate in debates and votes in relation to the setting of the Council Tax precept and approving of the Members' Allowance Scheme.

He informed Members that dispensations could be granted for four years as this was the maximum period allowed. As the existing dispensations were due to expire, it was appropriate to grant new dispensations. A list of those Members seeking dispensations was distributed at the meeting:

Requires Dispensations For Members' Allowances Scheme And Council Tax Precept:

Councillors Michael Beanland, Mike Biggin, David Brown, Razia Daniels, Martyn Delaney, David Edwardes, Gina Lewis, Nick Mannion, Karen Mundry, Stef Nelson, James Nicholas, Les Morgan, Stuart Parker, Jonathan Parry, Rob Polhill, Bob Rudd, Morgan Tarr, Peter Wheeler, Norman Wright and Steve Wright

Requires Dispensations For Members' Allowances Scheme:
Councillor Phil Harris

Members granted dispensations to those who had requested them and it was noted that the dispensations could be extended at the next Fire Authority meeting to those Members that had not requested them in time for the Committee.

RESOLVED: That

[1] dispensations be granted to the Members of Cheshire Fire Authority listed in this minute to allow them to take part in debates and votes concerning the setting of the Council Tax precept and approval of the Members' Allowances Scheme (and any changes/additions to it).

3 INDEPENDENT (NON-ELECTED) MEMBERS - FURTHER TERM OF OFFICE

NOTE: Independent (non-elected) member, Lesley Thomson left the meeting for the discussion of this item.

Members agreed to recommend a further the term of office for Lesley Thomson.

RECOMMENDED: That

[1] Lesley Thomson serve a further term of office as an independent (non-elected) member.

4 REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which enabled Members to consider the process and indicative timeline proposed for the upcoming review of the Fire Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme (the Scheme).

He explained that the Members' Allowances Scheme was previously agreed on 14th February 2017 to cover a four year period. It was proposed that the same process should be used in the upcoming review as used previously.

During the last review, one member of from the Cheshire East's Independent Remuneration Panel assisted with the review.

The Director of Governance and Commissioning stated that he wanted to understand the expectations from Members and encourage them to engage in the review. So far he had only picked up one issue, i.e. whether it was possible to pay a Member more than one special responsibility allowance.

It was agreed that Members would discuss any concerns with the Director of Governance and Commissioning whilst the review was ongoing.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the process and indicative timeline contained in the report be approved.

5 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN 2018-19

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which provided Members with an update on the progress made in relation to the areas for action contained in the Annual Governance Statement 2018-19.

He referred Members to the Annual Governance Statement 2018-19 Action Plan attached as Appendix 1 to the report and provided them with a summary of progress against each area for action which included: Financial Sustainability; People; and Collaborations.

Members asked for clarification about priority based budgeting which was mentioned under Financial Sustainability. The Director of Governance and Commissioning explained how Priority Based Budgeting had been used and had assisted in analysing the Service's budgets.

Members noted that since the last visit from Her Majesty's Inspectorate, staff engagement had significantly improved. Efforts made from the Principle Officers to visit each watch on fire station were commended.

Members queried whether there had been savings in procurement as a result of Blue Light Collaboration.

The Director of Governance and Commissioning confirmed that the Service benefitted from better than traditionally available rates due to the co-ordination of activities with the police.

He went on to explain that the Collaboration Strategy would include a programme for evaluation/review of each collaboration. The Collaboration Strategy was due to be approved at the next Fire Authority meeting. Activity on evaluation and review was expected to be reported to the Performance and Overview Committee.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report be noted.

6 APPOINTMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT PERSON

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which enabled Members to decide whether to recommend the appointment of an Independent Person.

He confirmed that the Fire Authority had received one application from Mr Donald

Clark who was currently an Independent Person for Warrington Borough Council. Mr Clark was the subject of two excellent references, one of which was in relation to his current work as an Independent Person.

Prior to the meeting, three members of the Governance and Constitution Committee along with one independent (non-elected) member, interviewed Mr Clark for the position of the Fire Authority's Independent Person.

After considering the report and listening to the views of the interview panel, Members agreed to recommend the appointment of Mr Clark as an Independent Person for Cheshire Fire Authority.

RECOMMENDED: That

[1] Mr Donald Clark be appointed as an Independent Person.