



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 30 March 2022 at Lecture Theatre - Training Centre, Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillors Rob Polhill (Chair), Nick Mannion, Rachel Bailey, David Brown 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 Councillors Mike Biggin, Martyn Delaney and Brian Gallagher.

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 10th November 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020-21 ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which presented a progress update on the Annual Governance Statement 2020-21 Action Plan.

Members praised all staff for their work throughout the Coronavirus Pandemic.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Annual Governance Statement 2020-21 Action Plan Update be noted.

3 DRAFT STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2021-22

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which provided Members with an opportunity to review the draft Statement of Assurance

for 2021-22. Members commented that the document was clear, concise and accessible to the public.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the draft Statement of Assurance be recommended to the Fire Authority for approval, at the appropriate time.

4 REVIEW OF MEMBER CHAMPION ARRANGEMENTS

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which allowed Members to consider the conclusion of the Review of the Member Champion Arrangements and make a recommendation to the Fire Authority. He advised that the report summarised the outcome of the Review, taking into consideration the views of Members that were made during the Member Planning Day on 14th January 2022.

Members noted paragraphs 9 to 11 within the report which set out the proposals for the Member Champion arrangements in 2022-23. Members welcomed the proposals and agreed that another report about the effectiveness of the arrangements should be submitted in April 2023.

Members discussed a range of ways that Members could promote the work that they had carried out in their Member Champion roles.

RECOMMENDED: That

[1] the Fire Authority continue with the existing Member Champion arrangements for 2022-23 with the introduction of the requirements outlined in paragraphs 9 – 11 within the report.

5 EXTERNAL AUDITOR RECOMMENDATION - AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which allowed Members to consider a suitable response to the External Auditor's recommendation concerned with the creation of an audit committee with an independent member. Members were referred to Appendix 1; the recommendation made by the External Auditor.

Members welcomed the recommendation from the External Auditor. Following discussion a number of decisions were made, which should be recommended to the Fire Authority. These were: that an audit committee be created with the responsibilities set out in paragraph 5 of the report; that the audit committee would have a membership of four elected Members drawn from the Governance and Constitution Committee and one independent audit member; and that the Governance and Constitution Committee would arrange for and make the appointment of the independent audit member.

The Director of Governance and Commissioning explained that the Fire Authority would consider the matter at its next meeting and the feedback from the committee would be included in its report.

RECOMMENDED: That

- [1] the Fire Authority create an audit committee with the responsibilities set out in paragraph 5 of the report;**
- [2] the membership of the audit committee consist of four elected Members drawn from the membership of the Governance and Constitution Committee, together with an independent audit member; and**
- [3] the Governance and Constitution Committee arrange for and make the appointment of the independent audit member.**