



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday, 27 April 2022 at Lecture Theatre - Training Centre, Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ at 10.30 am

PRESENT: Councillors Bob Rudd (Chair), Stef Nelson, Rachel Bailey, Razia Daniels, Phil Eastty, Phil Harris, Jill Houlbrook, Gina Lewis, Karen Mundry, Stuart Parker, Jonathan Parry, Rob Polhill, Peter Wheeler and Norman Wright

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 Michael Beanland, Mike Biggin, David Brown, Martyn Delaney, Brian Gallagher, Marilyn Houston, Nick Mannion, Rob Moreton and James Nicholas.

C Chair's Announcements

The Chair asked Members to note the content of the Chair's announcements which included details of Authority achievements and events Members had attended since the last meeting of the Fire Authority.

Supporting Ukraine – Convoy of Supplies

Members were advised that a convoy of donated fire engines along with a vast array of PPE and equipment including items from Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service had arrived safely in the Ukraine thanks to a joint initiative organised by the charity Fire Aid and the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC).

It was reported that more than 75 member of staff from Cheshire had volunteered to transport the vehicles donated in a fantastic gesture of support.

Members of the Fire Authority fully supported the donation of vehicles, PPE and equipment and took the opportunity to thank all staff involved in the convoy along with their families who had enabled this to happen.

Members asked that staff who took part in the convoy attend the next Member Planning Day to share their experiences with Members.

D Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

E Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions submitted.

F Minutes of Fire Authority

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 9th February 2022 be approved as a correct record.

G Minutes of Performance and Overview Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee held on 2nd March 2022 be noted.

H Minutes of Staffing Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Staffing Committee held on 21st March 2022 be noted.

I Minutes of Governance and Constitution Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee held on 30th March 2022 be noted.

J Notes of the Risk Management Board

RESOLVED:

That the Notes of the Risk Management Board held on 15th March 2022 be noted.

K Notes of the Member Training and Development Group

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the Member Training and Development Group held on 5th April 2022 be noted.

L Urgent Business to be determined between Fire Authority Meetings

The Director of Governance and Commissioning reported that an item of business was considered to be sufficiently urgent that it could not wait until this meeting. It was determined using the 'urgency procedure' contained in paragraphs 4.87 and 4.89 of the Constitution. The Chair and Group Spokespersons all supported the action.

RESOLVED: That the urgent business decision the 'Donation of vehicles and equipment to support firefighters in the Ukraine' be noted.

2 PEOPLE STRATEGY 2022-2025

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Transformation that sought approval of the People Strategy 2022-2025.

The previous People Strategy was structured around the service's established "Steps Framework" and assigned priorities and objectives into three key stages of employment: Step In, Step Forward and Step Up. The new People Strategy had maintained a similar approach but the Steps Framework had been updated and extended to include a fourth stage "Step Away" which recognised the challenges and ongoing work associated with an ageing workforce. The Strategy had also been updated to reflect the new core values and referenced both the internal and external drivers that shape the organisation's people priorities.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the People Strategy 2022-2025 be approved.

3 EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2021-22

The Audit Manager, Liz Luddington, from Grant Thornton presented the External Audit Plan for 2021-22.

The Audit Manager confirmed that the proposed fee was currently under consideration. The proposed fee would be discussed with officers over the coming months and would be presented to a future meeting of the Fire Authority for approval.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the External Audit Plan for 2021-22 be approved; and

[2] it be confirmed that the processes and controls, including judgements and assumptions in determining key accounting estimates, as set out by management in the document 'Informing the audit risk assessment for Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service 2021-22' are consistent with Members' understanding and are considered appropriate.

4 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2022-23

The Internal Auditor, Anne-Marie Harrop, from Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) presented the Internal Audit Plan for 2022-23.

Members were advised that the findings from internal audits were used by management to take action where control weaknesses were identified and also to provide the evidence upon which MIAA base a professional opinion about the effectiveness of the Authority's governance, risk management and control arrangements. Progress against the Plan was expected to be monitored during 2022-23 by the body that took on the role of audit committee

Members were advised that Internal Audit was an outsourced service, the contract with MIAA was due to expire in 2023, and the renewal of the contract would be subject to a tender process.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Internal Audit Plan for 2022-23 be approved.

5 CREATION OF AN AUDIT COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Governance and Commissioning that asked Members to consider the recommendation from the Governance and Constitution Committee concerned with the creation of an audit committee.

The Governance and Constitution Committee considered a report entitled 'External Auditor Recommendation – Audit Committee' at its meeting on 30th March 2022. The report was attached as Appendix 1 and contained the full recommendations from the External Auditor.

RESOLVED: That

[1] an Audit Committee with the responsibilities contained in paragraph 4 of the report be created;

[2] the Audit Committee have four elected members (appointed from the membership of the Governance and Constitution Committee by that Committee) together with an independent audit member; and

[3] the appointment of the independent audit member be carried out by the Governance and Constitution Committee (with the details of the appointment, e.g. remuneration, settled by that Committee).

6 STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2021-22

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Governance and Commissioning that sought approval of the Statement of Assurance 2021-22, as

required in the Fire and Rescue National Framework.

The Statement had been prepared in accordance with national guidance and included sections on financial assurance, governance and operational assurance.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Statement of Assurance 2021-22 be approved.

7 REVIEW OF MEMBER CHAMPION ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Governance and Commissioning that asked Members to consider the recommendation from the Governance and Constitution Committee about the review of the Member Champion arrangements.

The report considered by the Governance and Constitution Committee at its meeting on 30th March 2022 summarised the outcome of the Review of Member Champion arrangements, taking into consideration the views of Members that were made during the Member Planning Day on 14th January 2022.

RESOLVED: 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.