



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 5 October 2016 at Lecture Theatre - Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford, Cheshire at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillors R Polhill, P Booher, E Johnson, D Marren, L Thomson and A Ruddy

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 S Wright and A Dirir.

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 6th July 2016 be approved as a correct record.

2 DISPENSATIONS

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report and explained that dispensations were initially granted by the Committee on 8th February 2013 to all Members of the Fire Authority. Members were informed that the dispensations were granted for four years (up to 8th February 2017), the maximum period for which they can have effect. As this period was due to expire, he advised that it seemed appropriate to grant the dispensations for a further four years. A list of those Members seeking dispensations was distributed at the meeting:

REQUIRES DISPENSATIONS FOR MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME AND COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT:

Councillors P Booher, A Dirir, D Flude, P Harris, E Johnson, D Mahon, G Merry, J Mercer, L Morgan, S Parker, R Polhill, D Marren, K Mundry, S Nelson, B Rudd, J Saunders, T Sherlock, M Simon, J Weatherill and S Wright.

REQUIRES DISPENSATIONS FOR MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME:

Councillors D Bailey and M Tarr

Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 2 to the report, which was an extract from the report to the Committee on 8th February 2013 and provided detail of the original considerations of the Committee when the dispensations were granted.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the dispensations be granted to the Members of Cheshire Fire Authority listed above 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 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed Members that the purpose of the report was to seek Members' approval for the process and timeline for the next review of the Fire Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme. He referred Members to the background information within the report concerning the Authority's previous engagement with an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to review its Scheme. He drew Members' attention to the proposal for the upcoming review.

Members were content with the proposal but stressed that the individual appointed to provide an independent view must be completely independent politically.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme be agreed by Members to commence in November 2016, with the final report to be submitted to the Fire Authority meeting in February 2017 (to take effect from 1st April 2017); and

[2] the process outlined in paragraph 12 of the report be agreed by Members.

4 REVIEW OF WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report which asked Members to consider and approve changes to the Authority's current Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

He referred Members to Appendix 1 of the report which contained the Government's Guidance for Employers and Code of Practice for whistleblowing. He informed Members that the Authority's current policy covered the suggested areas within the Government's guidance document.

The Chair asked how the Service's employees were made aware of the Authority's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained to Members that employees were initially informed of the policy and procedure as part of their induction. Employees were also made aware of the policy and procedure through notices on the information boards, which provided details of the confidential reporting line 'Safecall' that could be used for whistleblowing, and

via the 'Green' (the internal news bulletin).

A Member queried the use of Grant Thornton, the external auditor to the Authority, as a contact for external disclosure due to their relationship with the Service. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised Members that Grant Thornton provided one additional option for employees to communicate any concerns.

A Member suggested that the Authority should consider introducing a Whistleblowing Member Champion. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that the Chair of the Governance and Constitution Committee would undertake this role.

RESOLVED: That

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

[2] the updated Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure be approved.

5 REVIEW OF ANTI-BRIBERY POLICY AND ARRANGEMENTS

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report which informed Members of the Authority's anti-bribery arrangements. He explained the importance of ensuring that the Authority had arrangements in place to ensure the prevention of bribery within the organisation and provided details of how the policy was publicised to employees.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the continued approval of the Anti-Bribery Policy be confirmed; and

[2] the arrangements for promoting the Anti-Bribery Policy be noted.