



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 19 April 2023 at Lecture Theatre - Training Centre, Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ at 10.30 am

PRESENT: Councillors Rob Polhill (Chair), Rachel Bailey, David Brown, Brian Gallagher, Nick Mannion, James Nicholas 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 Nathan Pardoe.

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 16th November 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021-22 ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Treasurer introduced the report which provided an update on the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2021-22 Action Plan. He highlighted each Area for Action and noted the progress made in March 2023.

A Member raised concerns that the formal Section 114 notice process had not been highlighted in previous years. The Treasurer assured her that officers were aware of the process, and it was the case of formally documenting the process.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Annual Governance Statement 2021-22 Action Plan Update be noted.

3 DRAFT STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2022-23

The Director of Governance introduced the report which provided Members with an opportunity to review the draft Statement of Assurance for 2022-23. He explained

the document was produced annually as one of the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. It was noted that some information needs to be included once it had been finalised such as the Internal Auditor's opinion.

RECOMMENDED: That

[1] the draft Statement of Assurance be approved by the Fire Authority.

4 MEMBER CHAMPIONS ARRANGEMENTS

The Director of Governance introduced the report which allowed Members to consider the Member Champions arrangements and make recommendations to the Fire Authority.

He summarised the report which suggested that the existing Member Champions arrangements continue with an additional 'reporting' element during 2023-24. Members felt that it would be appropriate for the Member Champions to provide a summary of their work at Member Planning Days.

Members noted the importance of the Champion roles and highlighted the benefits they provided to the Service and local communities.

RECOMMENDED: That

[1] the existing Member Champions arrangements continue in 2023-24 (with a requirement for the Member Champions to share information about their role with all Members during the Municipal Year).

5 REVIEW OF ANTI-FRAUD AND ANTI-BRIBERY POLICIES

The Treasurer introduced the report which enabled Members to consider whether the Anti-Bribery Policy and the Anti-Fraud Policy remained fit for purpose. He advised that the policy had minor changes to reflect changes in staffing.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Bribery Policies both be approved.

6 REVIEW OF MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

The Director of Governance introduced the report which allowed Members to consider whether there should be any changes to the Members' Code of Conduct (the Code).

The report did not propose any changes to the Code other than a slight update which would be required should the Fire Authority confirm the change to the status of the Independent Audit Committee Member.

RECOMMENDED: That

- [1] subject to the Fire Authority confirming that the Independent Audit Committee Member would be a co-opted Member (as part of the decision concerning the responsibilities of the Audit Committee) the minor change to the Code set out in the report be approved by the Fire Authority.**

7 RESPONSIBILITIES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE (AND ANCILLARY MATTERS)

The Director of Governance introduced the report which replicated the version submitted to the Audit Committee prior to the meeting. He provided Members with a document that set out the Audit Committee arrangements recommended by the Audit Committee that had taken place immediately before the meeting. He went on to explain that certain constitutional changes would be necessary if the Audit Committee arrangements were approved.

RECOMMENDED: That

- [1] the attached document setting out the responsibilities (and ancillary matters) relating to the Audit Committee be approved by the Fire Authority, together with the constitutional revisions required as set out in the report.**