



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday, 26 April 2023 at Lecture Theatre - Training Centre, Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ at 10.30 am

PRESENT: Councillors Bob Rudd (Chair), Rachel Bailey, Michael Beanland, David Brown, Kath Buckley, Brian Gallagher, Phil Harris, Marilyn Houston, Nick Mannion, Rob Moreton, Karen Mundry, Stef Nelson, James Nicholas, 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 Razia Daniels, Gina Lewis Denis Murphy, Nathan Pardoe, Stuart Parker, Jonathan Parry and Peter Walker.

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.

The Chair advised that firefighter Ken Wong had sadly passed away on Tuesday 18th April 2023 at the age of 44. Ken joined Green Watch at Crewe Fire Station in 2018 after serving with West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service and Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service. Crewe was his hometown, and he was very proud to serve for Cheshire. He leaves his wife Gretta and sons Louie and Leo. Ken was an excellent firefighter, a popular colleague and a much-loved friend. A minute's silence was observed at the meeting.

The Chair reported that he had the pleasure of announcing the appointment of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Lee Shears and Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Neil Griffiths following a formal interview and presentation to Members of the Authority's Staffing Committee on 21st April 2023. Lee and Neil were congratulated.

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 15th February 2023 be approved as a correct record.

G Minutes of Performance and Overview Committee

RESOLVED: That

[1] the minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee held on 1st March 2023 be noted.

H Minutes of Brigade Managers' Pay and Performance Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Brigade Manager's Pay and Performance Committee held on 22nd March 2023 be noted.

I Minutes of Audit Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Audit Committee held on 19th April 2023 be noted.

J Minutes of Governance and Constitution Committee

RESOLVED:

[1] That the minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee held on 19th April 2023 be noted;

[2] That the current Member Champion arrangements for 2022-23 be carried forward into 2023-24, with a requirement for Member Champions to provide an update to Members about the work associated with the role; and

[3] That the Members' Code of Conduct be amended to acknowledge the fact that the Fire Authority now has a co-opted member on one of its committees.

K Notes of the Risk Management Board

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the Risk Management Board held on 14th March 2023 be noted.

L Notes of the Local Pension Board - Firefighters Pension Scheme

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the Local Pension Board – Firefighters Pension Scheme held on 29th March 2023 be noted.

M Notes of the Member Training and Development Group

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the Member Training and Development Group held on 4th April 2023 be noted.

2 EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2022-23

The Audit Manager, Liz Luddington, from Grant Thornton presented the report which allowed Members to consider the External Audit Plan for 2022-23 and risks to be considered as part of the audit. Members were advised that the External Audit Plan for 2022-23 was considered by the Audit Committee on 19th April 2023.

The Audit Manager confirmed the fee and stated that the slight increase was due to new auditing standards requiring additional procedures to be included within the audit. The additional procedures included the ISO135 on financial systems and ISO240 for enhanced and direct enquiries with those charged with governance.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the External Audit Plan for 2022-23 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 2022-23’ are consistent with Members’ understanding and are considered appropriate.

3 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2023-24

The Internal Auditor, Anne-Marie Harrop, from Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) presented the Internal Audit Plan for 2023-24. Members were advised that the draft Internal Audit Plan for 2023-24 was considered by the Audit Committee on 19th April

2023.

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 would be monitored during 2023-24 by the Audit Committee.

Members were concerned that membership of the Audit Committee could alter as a result of change to the Fire Authority due to the local elections that were taking place next month. They were given some reassurance: members of the Audit Committee would be trained; and there would be no provision for substitutes.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Internal Audit Plan for 2023-24 be approved.

4 STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2022-23

The Director of Governance introduced the report that sought approval of the Statement of Assurance 2022-23, 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 2022-23 be approved.

5 REVIEW OF MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT 2022-23 AND MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2023-24

The Director of Governance presented a report that contained a review of the member development activities over the last year and included a summary of the delivery of the Member Development Programme.

The report also presented the proposed Member Training and Development Programme for 2023-24 for approval.

Councillor Karen Mundry, on behalf of the Chair of the Member Training and Development Group thanked all Members of the Fire Authority for their attendance and contributions to the Authority's Member Development Programme throughout the year and encouraged all Members to attend the training and development sessions planned for 2023-24.

Members were satisfied with the training and development received by the Service and suggested that the Service should explore seeking an award in recognition of the training and development activities that are provided.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Member Development activities for 2022-23 be noted; and**
- [2] the Member Development Programme for 2023-24 be approved.**

6 RESPONSIBILITIES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE (AND ANCILLARY MATTERS)

The Director of Governance referenced to the report that was considered by Audit Committee and recommendations from the Governance and Constitution Committee. He also referred to pages 43 and 44 of the Supplementary Agenda Pack. Finally, he mentioned the consequent changes to the Constitution that were set out on page 163 of the Agenda Pack.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] The document on pages 43 and 44 of the Supplementary Agenda Pack setting out the responsibilities (and ancillary matters) relating to Audit Committee be approved; and**
- [2] the constitutional revisions as set out on page 163 of the Agenda Pack be approved.**

7 URGENT ITEM

The Chair of the Fire Authority accepted that this Item could be discussed and determined as the matter was of an urgent nature.

Donation of Further Assets to Support Firefighters in Ukraine

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented the report.

RESOLVED: That

Two vehicles be donated to support firefighters in Ukraine.