



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 17 April 2024 at Lecture Theatre - Fire Service Headquarters, Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillors Rob Polhill (Chair), Brian Gallagher, Peter Walker, Peter Wheeler 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 Sherin Akhtar, Rachel Bailey and David Brown.

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 8th November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 DRAFT STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2023-24

The Director of Governance introduced the report which provided Members with an opportunity to review the draft Statement of Assurance for 2023-24. He explained that 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 needed to be added once it had been finalised, e.g. the auditors' opinions.

RECOMMENDED: That

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

3 REVIEW OF MEMBER CHAMPION ARRANGEMENTS

The Director of Governance introduced the report which allowed Members to consider the Member Champions arrangements and make a recommendation to the Fire Authority. It was noted that progress had been made since the last time the

Member Champions arrangements had been considered. However, some roles still needed further work.

A Member commented that they found the information provided at the Member Planning Day on Member Champion activity to be useful. It was hoped that the reporting could be standardised across the roles.

RECOMMENDED: That

[1] the Fire Authority continue with the existing arrangements for the Member Champions in 2024-25 with a view to further develop some roles.

4 FIRE AUTHORITY CONSTITUTION - REVIEW (PART THREE)

The Director of Governance introduced the report which enabled Members to consider changes to the Fire Authority's Constitution for recommendation to the Fire Authority. The report considered Section 4, Procedural Matters and Section 11, Scheme of Delegation (Powers of Officers).

He highlighted Appendix 1 which contained the revised version of the Procedural Matters section. The revisions included clarification of some areas and updates to allow actions by electronic means. Significant changes were highlighted in yellow.

Members were also drawn to Appendix 2 which contained the revised version of the Scheme of Delegation. The changes included the realignment of some responsibilities and the combination of some activities which now sat with the full time Treasurer position. The Director of Governance advised that officers would be observing the progression of the White Paper on Fire Reform to determine whether further changes would be needed, e.g. to the responsibilities of the Fire Authority given the debate about the Chief Fire Officer operational independence.

Members noted that transparency between both appendices and thanked officers for their clarity.

RECOMMENDED: That

[1] Sections 4 and 11 of the Constitution, as appended to the report, be approved by the Fire Authority at its meeting on Wednesday 26th June 2024 (along with the rest of the Constitution).

5 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Treasurer introduced the report which notified Members that the Financial Regulations had been reviewed by officers. He advised that there were no changes to the document attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

RECOMMENDED: That

- [1] the Financial Regulations be adopted by the Fire Authority at its meeting on Wednesday 26th June 2024 (along with the rest of the Constitution).**

6 ANNUAL 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). He advised there had been no updates to the national code produced by the Local Government Association. Therefore, he did not propose any changes to the Code.

RECOMMENDED: That

- [1] the Members' Code of Conduct be approved by the Fire Authority at its meeting on Wednesday 26th June 2024 (along with the rest of the Constitution).**