



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 6 November 2024 at Lecture Theatre - Fire Service Headquarters, Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ at 10.00 am**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Rob Polhill (Chair), Sherin Akhtar, Rachel Bailey, David Brown, Peter Walker, Sagheer Zaman 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 Peter Wheeler.

**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 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.**

**2 CONCLUSION OF THE 2024 REVIEW OF THE MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME**

The Director of Governance introduced the report which asked Members to consider the Report of the Independent Reviewer concerned with her review of the Members' Allowances Scheme. The report summarised the findings of the Independent Reviewer.

Members were asked to note the minor change made on page 10, paragraph 9, under bullet point 5. 'North West Fire Forum attendance' needed to be crossed out and removed.

A Member questioned whether the Independent Reviewer took into account Constituent Authorities percentage increases to allowances in recent years. The Director of Governance explained that this was not her role; she was focused on the Fire Authority's Scheme rather than how the constituent authorities approached the application of annual increases.

Members discussed the dependents' carers' allowance. It was suggested that this allowance may not have been claimed by any Member in recent years due to the potential criticism they may receive. Members were, however, eager to ensure that this allowance was publicised hopefully ensuring that Members would be comfortable claiming the allowance in appropriate circumstances.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] Members indicated that they were satisfied with the Report of the Independent Reviewer (which would be taken into account in agreeing the future Members' Allowances Scheme for 2025-26 and beyond).**

**3 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME: ANNUAL INCREASE TO BE APPLIED TO 2024-25 SCHEME; AND DRAFT 2025-26 SCHEME**

The Director of Governance introduced the report which recommended that Members considered the annual increase to the Members Allowances Scheme 2024-25 and the draft Members Allowances Scheme for 2025-26.

Members were asked to note a minor change to the Scheme that appeared at Appendix 1 page 22, paragraph 4 of the Agenda Pack. The payments of £75/£150 per meeting for Regional Appointments were incorrectly stated; there was no recommendation to change the current £35 payment per meeting.

Members discussed the difference in payment for an Independent (non-elected) member and an Independent Audit Committee member. Members were informed the two roles were not necessarily comparable. One role required the holder to attend significantly more meetings than the holder of the other role. One role required the holder to have a specific background/skillset that was necessary to ensure that they were effective in role.

**RECOMMENDED: That the Fire Authority**

**[1] agrees that an annual increase of 3.83% should be applied to the Members' Allowances Scheme 2024-25; and**

**[2] approves the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2025-26 at Appendix 1 to the report (accepting the minor change noted during the meeting and highlighted in these minutes).**