

## **CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY**

**MEETING OF:** GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE  
**DATE :** 12<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2017  
**REPORT OF:** DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND COMMISSIONING  
**AUTHOR:** ANDREW LEADBETTER

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**SUBJECT:** NEW MEMBER DECISION-MAKING BODY

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To allow Members to consider a proposal for a new Member decision-making body.

### **Recommended that Members:**

- [1] Determine whether they wish to recommend to the Fire Authority that it creates an additional Member decision-making body:
- [2] Agree the name, membership and responsibilities of the additional Member decision-making body: and
- [3] Decide on the allowance payable to the Chair of the additional Member decision-making body.

### **Background**

2. The introduction of a new service management structure and creation of the new joint corporate services with Cheshire Constabulary has required officers to review the Service's management responsibilities and reporting arrangements. This has coincided with the development of a range of significant projects/programmes that will need to be delivered, e.g. the Training Centre. Officers believe that there would be a benefit from having a smaller group of Members able to make some decisions and support officers in the delivery of the projects/programmes. Some additional issues could also be included in the remit of a body formed to fulfil this primary role.
3. A discussion took place between officers and a number of Members from the Brigade Managers' Pay and Performance Committee. As a consequence, officers were asked to bring forward a proposal to create an additional Member decision-making body.

## Information

What would the new Member decision-making body be concerned with?

4. Paragraphs 5-11 below provide examples of the sort of issues that led to the discussion about introducing a new Member decision-making body. The paragraphs are in no particular order of importance.
5. The Authority's properties are beginning to show their age and there is a backlog of work. The fire stations no longer reflect the image of a modern fire and rescue service; a situation which is emphasised now that we have new fire stations. A programme of refurbishment and improvement is needed. This programme needs to be fully costed, prioritised, procured and then delivered over a period of time. Members should engage with officers about aspects of this process.
6. The Authority is continuing to work closely with police colleagues to identify opportunities for site/premises sharing. It is expected that this could lead to the creation of approximately ten shared sites. There may also be further opportunities to share sites with North West Ambulance Service. Members should be fully appraised of the proposals, especially if they may have any impact locally.
7. The Authority is also involved in a range of potential projects (with both public and private sector organisations) at its key fire station sites, some or all of which will include property transactions/broader contractual arrangements. Whilst the Authority is clearly required to set the direction/strategy the involvement of Members in some of the detail could be necessary and helpful.
8. The Training Centre project is significant and relatively complex, involving not only a build project, but also the securing of suitable arrangements to continue to deliver training away from Sadler Road during the project. The budget is likely to come under some pressure and Members could provide objective input when priorities are considered. They can also help to engage in the programme in a way that would not be expected at the Performance and Overview Committee.
9. The Authority's Environmental Strategy currently has no obvious 'home': the Environment Board was ended some time ago. The involvement of Members will help provide fresh impetus to the Authority's environmental work.
10. The Authority's procurement activity is likely to be one area of focus for the new inspectorate at a time when there is a push for increased collaborative buying. The Authority will be committing to significant expenditure, which can no longer be funded from reserves (it will need to borrow) and it will be more important than ever that it makes good procurement choices and follows best procurement practise. Member involvement can help to provide additional governance.

11. The Authority will, shortly, see the commencement of the operation of Safety Central. Members were always expected to retain an interest in the running of the safety centre and this body could fulfil this role.
12. The following is a suggested set of words to describe the responsibilities (associated with the issues captured in the preceding paragraphs) that would need to be incorporated into the Authority's Constitution:

*The [body] will be responsible for:*

*Ensuring that the Fire Authority's property management arrangements are appropriate, providing guidance to officers as necessary.*

*Providing guidance to officers and the Fire Authority in relation to property transactions.*

*Providing guidance to officers and the Fire Authority in relation to the sharing of its sites/premises with third parties.*

*Assisting in the co-ordination of and agreeing the prioritisation of property-related projects/programmes.*

*Assisting in the co-ordination of and agreeing the prioritisation of environmental projects/programmes and supporting officers and the Fire Authority in the delivery of matters that further the Authority's Environmental Strategy.*

*Engaging in key procurement issues as necessary.*

*Overseeing the arrangements for Safety Central.*

13. Progress on the delivery of projects/programmes would continue to be monitored by the Performance and Overview Committee.

What should the new Member decision-making body be called?

14. Whilst this should not be a significant issue, there has been some difficulty finding a name that Members appeared to favour and which encapsulates the responsibilities listed above. Officers have concluded that Assets Committee or Assets Board might be appropriate options given that much of the body's responsibilities are concerned with property assets. However, it is acknowledged that the body has a broader remit than just assets.

Who should sit on the new Member decision-making body?

15. Members have suggested the following:

The four Lead Members representing each of the unitary authorities, plus three other Members one of whom should be Chair.

Officers have suggested that it would be beneficial to ensure that the appointments include the Member Champions for the Environment and

Procurement and an independent (non-elected) member is also invited to attend.

When will meetings be held?

16. It is proposed that the Committee will meet as and when required to allow for greater flexibility. The ability to meet at relatively short notice will be particularly useful when dealing with procurement issues and property transactions.

### **Financial Implications**

17. The cost of an additional Member decision-making body will depend upon which Member is appointed to the role of Chair and whether any other special responsibility allowance is already payable to that Member. Members have suggested that the allowance for the Chair should be the same as that payable to the Chair of Governance and Constitution Committee (currently £1579.43). Additional costs will be met by the existing budget allocation for Members allowances.

### **Legal Implications**

18. There are none.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

19. There are none.

### **Environmental Implications**

20. There are none.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE**