



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE held on Monday, 12 June 2017 at Lecture Theatre - Fire Headquarters, Cheshire at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors P Booher, E Johnson, D Marren, R Polhill, S Wright and independent (non-elected) members A Ruddy and L Thomson

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 A Dirir.

C Declarations of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

D Minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee

RESOLVED: That

The minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee held on 8th February be approved as a correct record.

2 DRAFT STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2016-17

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which provided Members with the opportunity to review an early draft of the Statement of Assurance 2016-17.

He explained that the Fire and rescue national framework for England 2012 included a requirement for fire and rescue authorities to 'provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they had due regard to the expectations set out in the integrated risk management plan and the requirement included in the framework'. In order to do so authorities were required to publish an annual statement of assurance.

The Director of Governance and Commissioning explained that the report outlined the process the Authority followed to support the preparation of the Authority's Statement of Assurance which would be submitted to the Fire Authority in September for approval. He drew Members attention to the key improvement areas identified during the process in 2016/17 which included policy management, re-launching the partnership toolkit and delivering the Environmental Strategy.

A Member suggested that the Governance and Constitution Committee receive a further report on the Authority's partnership policy and governance to look at the process in more detail.

The Director of Governance and Commissioning informed Members that one of the key challenges in respect of assurance about operational matters going forward would be the effective delivery of training for firefighters whilst the Sadler Road site was developed. He explained that the Service would need to ensure that it had adequate resilient interim arrangements in place to deliver operational training to minimise the impact and this would need to be monitored and subsequently reported on.

A Member noted that the Service had a risk management framework, business continuity plans and a cross-border working agreement in place and queried if there were any contingency plans currently in place to deal with a pandemic. The Director of Governance and Constitution explained that the Service was currently reviewing its business continuity plans to ensure that any changes to working arrangements as part of the Blue Light Collaboration programme were taken into account. He would liaise with the relevant officers to find out what the current contingency arrangements were and would ensure that information was included in the Statement of Assurance when it was submitted to the Fire Authority in September 2017.

RESOLVED: That

[1] The format and content of the draft Statement of Assurance 2016/17 be noted.

3 NEW MEMBER DECISION-MAKING BODY

The Director of Governance and Commissioning presented the report which provided details of a proposal for a new Member decision-making body and the Committee were asked to determine whether they wished to make a recommendation to the Fire Authority in respect of the proposal.

He informed Members that the introduction of a new service management structure and the creation of the new joint corporate services with Cheshire Constabulary had required officers to review the Service's management responsibilities and reporting arrangements. This had coincided with the development of a range of significant projects/proposals that needed to be delivered. Officers had discussed the possibility of having a small group of Members able to make some decisions and support officers in the delivery of projects and programmes with members of 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.

The report described the responsibilities of the new decision-making body as well as its name, membership and some ancillary matters.

A Member queried whether some of the terminology used to describe the responsibilities of the body was sufficiently clear. The Chair explained his understanding of the role of the body. The Director of Governance and Constitution reiterated that the body would only be able to take decisions in circumstances where the strategic view of the Fire Authority was known. He gave an example where an important decision was made by the Fire Authority but implementation was facilitated by officers and members of the new body.

RESOLVED: The Committee recommend to the Fire Authority that:

[1] a new decision-making body be created;

[2] the body be named Estates and Property Committee with the following responsibilities:

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.

[3] the membership of the Committee comprise of 7 Members (including 4 Lead Members and the Procurement and Environment Member Champions plus one other Member) and 1 independent (non- elected) member; and

[4] the Members Allowance Scheme be amended so that the role of Chair of the Committee be allocated a special responsibility allowance in line with that payable to the Chair of Governance and Constitution (currently £1579.45).