

MEETING OF : **Cheshire Fire Authority**
DATE : **15 June 2016**
REPORT OF : **Head of Legal and Democratic Services**
AUTHOR : **Joanne Smith**

**SUBJECT: APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT
(NON-ELECTED) MEMBERS**

Purpose of Report

1. To allow Members to confirm the arrangements for Independent (non-elected) members (IMs) on the Fire Authority's Committees and to approve the appointment of two IMs.

Recommended: That Members

- [1] confirm that Independent (non-elected) members be appointed to the following meetings (in an advisory capacity):
Governance and Constitution Committee (2)
Performance and Overview Committee (1)
Member Training and Development Group (1);
- [2] to appoint Aimee Ruddy and Lesley Thomson as Independent (non-elected) members for a term of office of four years.

Background

2. The Fire Authority considered the introduction of new arrangements for IMs at its meeting on 12th February 2016 following recommendations from the Governance and Constitution Committee and the following was agreed:
 - [1] independent members be retained in an advisory capacity;
 - [2] the role of independent members be reviewed;
 - [3] the number of independent members be reduced from 3 to 2;
 - [4] independent members serve a term of four years but be eligible to apply to serve a further term; and
 - [5] new arrangements be introduced in time for appointments to be made at the Fire Authority's meeting in June 2016.
3. A small group of Members from the Governance and Constitution Committee comprising of Councillors S Wright, M Biggin, D Marren and L Morgan met on 29th February and reviewed the recruitment documents and agreed the timelines for the recruitment. The Governance and Constitution Committee received a report on progress at its meeting on 30th March and it was agreed that the roles be advertised.

4. The selection panel (comprised of Councillors S Wright, D Marren and L Morgan) met in May to review the applications and shortlisted for interviews. The interviews were held on 31st May 2016 and the Member panel agreed that they would wish to recommend the appointment of Aimee Ruddy and Lesley Thomson as IMs for the Fire Authority.

Information

5. Aimee Ruddy has previously worked as a civil servant for the Scottish Executive and also for Warrington Collegiate as a Work Placement Officer. Lesley Thomson has held a variety of roles in the welfare to work sector, higher education and the NHS and is a qualified mediator. She also volunteers as an Independent Person for Cheshire West and Chester and is currently employed as a Clerk to School Governors in Cheshire East. The panel felt that both applicants had the necessary skills to develop into the role.
6. Members are asked to note that the recruitment pack contained a set of eligibility criteria which included a requirement for an applicant not to have been a Member or Officer of the Fire Authority or any of the constituent authorities in the last five years. Lesley Thomson has recently been appointed as a Clerk to the School Governors providing support to a number of schools in Cheshire East she is now an employee of Cheshire East Council. Members on the selection panel did not feel that this should preclude her from being appointed as they believed that the eligibility criteria was aimed at officers working in the Council's Corporate Services not an employee engaged in front-line duties in a school.

Financial Implications

7. There is a small cost of having IMs. This is adequately covered in the budget.

Legal Implications

8. The involvement of IMs is not a legal requirement. The Fire Authority is required to uphold high standards and the role of IMs is associated with this and may provide members of the public with greater confidence about standards and decision making generally.

Equality and Diversity and Environmental Implications

9. There are no equality and diversity or environmental implications associated with this report.

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