



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 3 July 2019 at Lecture Theatre - Sadler Road, Cheshire at 10.00 am**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Steven Wright (Chair), Rob Polhill, Steve Wright, Derek Barnett, Rachel Bailey, Mike Biggin, David Brown, Martyn Delaney and Nick Mannion, Rob Polhill 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 independent (non-elected) member Lesley Thomson.

**C Membership of Committee**

The appointment of a Chair and membership of the Governance and Constitution Committee for 2019/20 was agreed by the Fire Authority at its annual meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Members were asked to note the membership, listed below:

Councillors:	Steve Wright – Chair Rob Polhill – Deputy Chair Rachel Bailey Mike Biggin David Brown Martyn Delaney Nick Mannion
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Substitutes:	Michael Beanland David Edwardes Peter Wheeler
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Independent (non-elected) Members:	Derek Barnett Lesley Thomson
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**D Responsibilities of Committee (and Sub-Committee)**

The Director of Governance and Commissioning briefly explained to Members the responsibilities of the Governance and Constitution Committee.

**E Declarations of Members' Interests**

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

## **F Minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee**

The Director of Governance and Commissioning asked Members to consider two matters that arose from the previous meeting on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019. Members were asked to approve the amended Members' Code of Conduct and Procedure for Handling Complaints.

A Member queried how often the Members' Code of Conduct was reviewed. The Director of Governance and Commissioning stated that it was reviewed annually by the Governance and Constitution Committee.

Members accepted the changes made to both documents and agreed to recommend them for approval to the Fire Authority.

### **RESOLVED: That**

- [1] the minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee held on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019 be confirmed as a correct record;**
- [2] the changes made to the Members' Code of Conduct (Appendix 1) and the Procedure for Handling Complaints (Appendix 2) be accepted; and**
- [3] the Members' Code of Conduct be recommended for approval by the Fire Authority.**

## **2 COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19**

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which provided information regarding compliments and complaints received about the Service during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. He explained that the report was presented annually in this format.

The Director of Governance and Commissioning provided an overview of the comparison figures for the past five reporting periods which were contained within a table in the report. He explained that figures had fluctuated, however, there was no obvious trend or pattern. Compared to the previous year, the Service had been a slight increase in the number of informal complaints and compliments received. The number of formal complaints was the same.

A Member asked how the Service uses patterns or trends in the complaints report to improve service. The Director stated that if there were trends in specific areas, these would encourage and inform a review.

A Member asked how staff were rewarded for the compliments they had received. The Director explained that there were many platforms for staff to receive recognition such as the STAR awards, Chief's Commendations and Long Service

and Good Conduct awards. He reminded Members that the last staff survey highlighted that the recognition of staff needed improvement and that the Service Management Team had worked towards achieving this.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the information regarding compliments and complaints made during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 be noted.**

**3 SUMMARY OF MEMBER ATTENDANCE 2018-19**

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which provided information about Member attendance for the last municipal year. Appendix 1 to the report summarised Member attendance at meetings of the Fire Authority and its three main committees: Estates and Property Committee, Governance and Constitution Committee and Performance and Overview Committee. Appendix 2 to the report contained details of the planning days and additional meetings attended, as well as conferences and events attended.

Members were asked to consider whether they wished to take any action in relation to the reported attendance statistics. Members discussed the statistics and noted that many of the Fire Authority Members from 2018-19 were no longer appointed to the Fire Authority for 2019-20. Members agreed that no action was necessary.

A Member requested that both first names and surnames of Fire Authority members be used in formal documentation to avoid confusion e.g. there were two Members who had the same surname this year. A Member also requested that in future versions of the document, the independent (non-elected) members' attendance at Member Planning Days be noted.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the summary of Member attendance at meetings of the Authority and its three main committees for 2018-19 be noted.**

**4 WHISTLEBLOWING ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19**

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which provided information about whistleblowing for 2018-19. The policy had been reviewed and no changes were required, apart from some amendments to the list of the names and contact details within and outside the Authority to whom concerns could be reported.

The Director informed Members that the Authority had not been contacted by Safecall since the last report to the Committee in 2018. He assured Members that this was likely to be as result of concerns being raised with managers and Safecall being considered a last resort.

A Member noted that processes were in place, however, he questioned whether staff felt comfortable reporting concerns. The Chair informed the group that

whistleblowing arrangements had been reviewed last year and that there were several channels of communication for staff to use. The Director suggested that Safecall could be featured in The Green to remind staff of the whistleblowing options.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Whistleblowing Annual Report 2018-19 be noted.**

**5 DISPENSATIONS**

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which asked Members to extend the benefit of the existing dispensations to new Members of the Fire Authority. This would allow them to take part in debates and votes on the setting of the council tax precept and approval of the Members' Allowance Scheme (and any changes and/or additions to it).

Appendix 1 to the report contained a copy of the legislation and Appendix 2 to the report contained an extract which explained the rationale for the granting of the original dispensations.

The Director of Governance and Commissioning informed the Committee that the following new Members had requested that the dispensations be extended so that they could benefit from them:

Councillor Rachel Bailey	Councillor Gina Lewis
Councillor Michael Beanland	Councillor Nick Mannion
Councillor David Brown	Councillor James Nicholas
Councillor Razia Daniels	Councillor Terry O'Neill
Councillor Martyn Delaney	Councillor Jonathan Parry
Councillor David Edwardes	Councillor Peter Wheeler

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the dispensations granted to Fire Authority Members on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2016 be extended to benefit the Councillors Rachel Bailey, Michael Beanland, David Brown, Razia Daniels, Martyn Delaney, David Edwardes, Gina Lewis, Nick Mannion, James Nicholas, Terry O'Neill, Jonathan Parry and Peter Wheeler, thereby allowing them to take part in debates and votes on the setting of the Council Tax precept and the approval of the Members' Allowance Scheme (and any changes and/or additions to it).**

**6 GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY GUIDANCE**

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report that detailed the proposed changes to the Gifts and Hospitality Guidance. The Director reminded Members that there was a protocol in the Authority's Constitution concerned with gifts and hospitality.

At a workshop held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018, Members discussed the parameters of the new guidance. After the consultation, officers drafted new guidance to be followed by both Members and staff. The new guidance had been simplified and included a table and a form to be submitted to the Monitoring Officer.

Members noted the simplified version of the guidance and felt their discussion within the workshop was accurately captured. Members accepted the changes made to the document and were satisfied to recommend its adoption by the Fire Authority.

**RESOLVED: That**

- [1] the report be noted;**
- [2] the revised Gifts and Hospitality Guidance be recommend for adoption by the Fire Authority;**
- [3] the changes to the paragraph concerning gifts and hospitality in the Members' Code of Conduct be amended as shown in paragraph 11 of the report.**