



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 27 January 2021 - Remote Meeting via Skype at 10.00am

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

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Members paused to acknowledge National Holocaust Day and also to remember the 100,000 people who had lost their lives during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A Recording of Meeting

Members were reminded that the meeting would be audio-recorded and broadcast live to enable public viewing.

B Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nick Mannion.

C Declarations of Members' Interests

The Chair stated that he believed all Members had a statutory pecuniary interest in Item 2, Members' Allowances Scheme 2021-22. However, all Members had been granted a dispensation to allow them to take part in any debate and vote about the approval of or changes to a scheme. All Members acknowledged that they had such an interest and that they would rely upon the dispensation.

No further declarations were made.

D Minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee held on Wednesday 29th July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2021-22

The Director of Governance and Commissioning referred to the report of the independent reviewer which was appended to the committee report. He took Members through the main elements of the independent reviewer's report. The report began by stating that the scheme format was typical and did not require significant change. The independent reviewer had also concluded that the levels of

the basic allowance and special responsibility allowances were appropriate and need not change. In addition the independent reviewer recommended that some other payments were increased to reflect the level of NJC pay increases during the period of the current scheme while travel, subsistence and other allowances should remain the same.

The Director asked Members to focus on two key points in the independent reviewer's report, Section 5.2 Payment of more than one special responsibility allowance and Section 5.3 Member Champions. The independent reviewer left the question of whether to pay more than one special responsibility allowance to an individual Member to the Fire Authority. Whilst she did not have a problem with this as long as it reflected the work being undertaken, she did note that it would be the exception looking across other comparable organisations and the constituent authorities. She was, however, of the view that the Fire Authority needed to carry out a review of the Member Champion roles, so that it could satisfy itself that each provides a meaningful benefit.

The Director referred Members to Appendix 2 to the committee report which contained a draft of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2021-22. This reflected the conclusions and recommendations of the independent reviewer. However, paragraph 3 was highlighted because a decision was required from Members before this could be finalised.

Members agreed that only one special responsibility allowance should be payable to an individual Member. Members also agreed that a review of Member Champions should be carried out. One of the independent (non-elected) members said that it was important that a review should consider the work and achievements of each Member Champion.

A Member asked if the Chair of the Pensions Board should be mentioned in the table in paragraph 2 of the Scheme. The Director confirmed that he would clarify the situation and update that table, as necessary.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report of the independent reviewer be noted; and**
- [2] the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2021-22 be finalised, taking into account the views of the Committee; and**
- [3] a review of the Member Champions be carried out by this Committee within the next twelve months.**

RECOMMENDED: That

- [4] the Fire Authority approve the finalised Members' Allowances Scheme for 2021-22.**

3 REVIEW INTO THE WAY THAT SEATS ON CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY ARE ALLOCATED TO THE CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES

The Director of Governance and Commissioning updated Members on the review into the way that seats on Cheshire Fire Authority are allocated to the Constituent Authorities.

The Director reported that the terms of reference had been finalised and that the review would be carried out by an independent reviewer. He indicated that an initial report was anticipated next month so that the Committee could consider the matter in April before the Fire Authority considered the matter later that month.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Report be noted.

4 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019-20 ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which provided Members with an update on the progress made in relation to the areas for action contained in the Annual Governance Statement 2019-20.

The Director expanded upon the narrative in Appendix 1 to the report for each of the areas for action: Coronavirus, Nationally-led Change and Collaborations.

The Committee extended its thanks to all staff across the Service who had performed to the highest standard in difficult circumstances.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Report be noted.