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Proposed Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority Governance Review

Report by the Chief Officer and the Clerk

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1 Summary

- 1.1 A growing pace of change has been affecting Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (the Service). A new Chairman and Chief Officer were appointed during 2015 and it was considered an appropriate point to commission a review of the Authority's governance arrangements and framework. The aim of the work is to ensure that the Authority is in the best position to continue to lead the Service in delivering excellent quality services to Hampshire, whilst remaining resilient and responsive to the change and challenges into the future.
- 1.2 It is proposed that a Member led review is undertaken, through the establishment of a Member Working Group under the following two themes:
 - To consider the effectiveness of the Authority's governance arrangements to ensure that they enable the best outcomes for our stakeholders.
 - To consider the efficiency of the Authority to ensure good value for money to the public.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That a review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Fire Authority's governance arrangements and structures is carried out and the draft terms of reference in Appendix A are agreed.
- 2.2 That HFRA Members be appointed to the Working Group on the basis set out in the terms of reference and in 4.1 of the report. That one of these Members be appointed Chairman of the Working Group.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority has a strong track record in applying good governance to managing the Service in delivering positive outcomes to the public.

The external and internal influences that affect the Service have been changing and continue to do so. Community risks have been shifting and the roles of the Service are adapting to address these. The Authority and Service have embraced partnerships and collaboration to help make Hampshire safer and reduce costs to meet diminishing budgets.

- 3.2 At the September 2015 meeting of the Fire Authority, it was announced that Councillors Fairhurst and Fuller would take on the informal positions of efficiency and effectiveness champions. This was in recognition of the importance attached to the efficient and effective running of the Authority and serves to add direction and leadership in these areas.
- 3.3 These circumstances and the appointment of new leaders for both the Authority and the Service provide a real opportunity to review the Authority's current arrangements. This will help to ensure that governance and scrutiny practices continue to enable robust decision making and strong leadership.
- 3.4 Whilst the Service continues to make financial savings to meet reducing budgets, it makes sense for the Authority to review its own cost bases to ensure that it continues to deliver value for money.

4 Terms of Reference

- 4.1 Draft Terms of Reference are attached in Appendix 1. These detail the potential scope of the review. It is proposed that a small cross-Party Member Working Group, representing all political Groups, be formed to undertake the review supported by officers. Appointment to the Working Group is subject to the Fire Authority's decision, however it is anticipated that the nominated efficiency and effectiveness champions and senior representatives from each of the political Groups will comprise the membership, furthermore that each of the three local Authorities will be represented. It is proposed that the Chairman of the Fire Authority attends meetings of the Working Group as an observer.
- 4.2 Although the review will be led by the Working Group, all Members of the Authority will be consulted at relevant stages to give their views on the governance of the Authority and to ensure that any potential opportunities to improve are explored. Any specific views or issues will be drawn into the review in this way, if not already represented on the Working Group.
- 4.3 The effectiveness element of the work will build on the Governance Statement which is prepared on an annual basis and on the evidence provided in the Charter Mark for Member Development, which the Authority holds. The CIPFA/SOLACE guidance 'Delivering good governance in Local Government', upon which the Annual Governance is based, includes some questions specific for Members to consider. It is proposed that some of these be used within the review.
- 4.4 The efficiency element will look at Committee and Authority structures, costs and outcomes to indicate value for money. A benchmarking exercise will be

commissioned to compare the Authority with other Combined Fire Authorities.

- 4.5 The review will also look at how governance works in our blue light partner organisations.
- 4.6 Although the basic and special responsibility allowances paid to Members in recognition of their role on the Fire Authority are relevant to consideration of value for money and efficiency, the process of setting a Members' Allowances Scheme is governed by specific legislation. A review of the Scheme was due to take place during 2015/16, however it is proposed in another report on the agenda that this review be deferred until the outcome of the governance review. In this way the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme can take account of any relevant outcomes from the governance review.

5 Supporting our corporate priorities and aims

- 5.1 Strong governance and decision making is central to the delivery of the priorities that are contained within the Service Plan.

6 Risk analysis

- 6.1 Good governance and decision making is an enabler to managing risks and optimising opportunities. A review will ensure that the Authority continues to be in a position to deliver this.

7 People Impact Assessment

- 7.1 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Equality Act 2010.

8 Resource implications

- 8.1 To undertake a comprehensive review, Member time and input will be required. Officer time will be used to support the work, and this will be resourced from the existing capacity in the Directorate Support team.

9 Consultation

- 9.1 Consultation will be made with all Fire Authority Members during the review to ensure that all contributions are included. A stakeholder analysis will be made to ensure that views and input is gained.

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 The current circumstances present the Authority with an opportunity to review its governance arrangements to help ensure that robust decision making and strong leadership continues in the future. As the Service continues to make financial

savings to meet reducing budgets, the Authority can take this opportunity to review its own costs to ensure that it also continues to deliver value for money.

11 Background papers

- Delivering good governance in Local Government – CIPFA/SOLACE
- The Good Governance Standard for Public Services – The Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services
- The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2012)
- Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2015-2020

Appendix A

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority (HFRA) Governance Review Draft Terms of Reference

Background

There is a growing pace of change that is affecting Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) from both internal and external factors. A new Chairman and Chief Officer were appointed during 2015. This, along with the changing circumstances in which the Service operates, provides an opportune moment for the Authority to review its governance arrangements and framework. The aim is to ensure that the Authority has the most effective and efficient governance arrangements and structures in place to lead the Service. It should aim to put it in the best position to continue to deliver excellent quality services to Hampshire and remain resilient and responsive to change and challenges into the future.

Objectives

To undertake a review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Fire Authority's governance arrangements and structures.

It is proposed that national guidance on governance be used as the basis for the effectiveness element of the review:

- Delivering good governance in Local Government – CIPFA/SOLACE
- The Good Governance Standard for Public Services – The Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services
- The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2012)

Scope

The key questions for the review to consider are as follows:

- What alignment is there with the governance structures of our blue light partners?
- Is the Authority focused on the organisation's purpose and on outcomes for citizens and service users and implementing a vision for the local area?
- Do members and officers work together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles?
- Does the Authority promote and demonstrate values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour?

- Is the Authority in a position to understand risks and opportunities, and provide adequate scrutiny to make transparent decision making in the current change environment?
- Does the Authority develop and use the capacity and skills of its elected members and officers to its greatest advantage?
- Does the Authority engage with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability?
- Does the Fire Authority provide good value for money to the public?
 - Is it the correct size to provide efficiency and effective governance?
 - Does it have the correct number and make up of committee and do they work effectively with productive meetings and relevant agendas?

Deliverables and timescales

The Working Group to meet as required, with an expectation that meetings will not be more than once per month. The Working Group has no specific budget but will be supported by officers within existing budgets, to reasonable limits.

The Working Group is not a decision making body and the outcomes of the review to be reported to the Authority in spring/summer 2016.

Membership, Roles and Responsibilities

The Working Group membership to be cross-Party, comprising:

- Three Conservative Members
- One Liberal Democrat Member
- One Labour Member
- One UKIP Member

The Chairman of the Working Group to be appointed by the Fire Authority from one of the above six Members.

The Chairman of the Fire Authority to attend Working Group meetings as an observer.

Recommendations of the Working Group to be agreed in line with the processes set out in the Authority's Standing Orders.

Officer support to be provided as required, but likely to include input from:

- Dave Curry, Chief Officer
- Geoff Howsego, Director of Professional Services
- Nicki Whitehouse, Directorate Support Manager
- Legal Services and Democratic Services on behalf of the Clerk to the Authority

Stakeholders/Consultees

Fire Authority members
Hampshire County Council
Portsmouth City Council
Southampton City Council