

9 June, 2010

Review of Current Committee Structure and Decision Making Arrangements

Report of the Clerk

Contact: Kevin Gardner, kevin.gardner@hants.gov.uk. Telephone: 01962 847381

1 Summary

- 1.1 At last year's Annual Meeting on 24 June 2009, it was agreed that the Governance Committee should be asked to review, and make recommendations to the Authority, upon the Authority's current committee and decision making arrangements, to ensure that these remain efficient and fit for purpose.
- 1.2 The proposed approach which the Governance Committee supported was to invite each of the Authority's committees to consider their particular terms of reference and report back to the Governance Committee on any changes they are recommending be made. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) is not a formal committee of the Authority and has no formal executive or decision making powers. No change is proposed to its current role.
- 1.3 The initial report to the Governance Committee of 20 November 2009, is available as a background paper, should Members wish to refer to this. Attached as Appendix 1 to this report is the report to Governance Committee of 24 March 2010, setting out the comments of the various committees, and the reasoning behind the proposed changes. Appendix 2 to this report sets out the proposed revised terms of reference, with changes from the current document shown by underlining. These changes are supported by the Governance Committee.

Recommendation

That, subject to any comments of the Authority, the terms of reference of the Authority's committees be revised as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

2 Views/Comments of Individual Committees

- 2.1 The views/comments of the individual committees on their particular terms of reference and the changes they are recommending were considered in the report to the Governance Committee of 24 March 2010.
- 2.2 After careful consideration, the Governance Committee supported the proposed revised terms of reference as identified in Appendix 2 of the report. The Committee also wish to highlight the importance of the role of the 3 independent Members of the Standards Committee, appointed by the Authority at its last meeting. The Governance Committee supports them being given the opportunity to attend and observe, if they so wish, some future meetings of the Authority and

the committees. Subject to any views expressed by Members, the Clerk is intending to arrange for this to happen.

- 2.3 In the course of preparing this final report on the review to the full Authority, two further amendments have been suggested. The first is that the Finance and General Purpose Committee's responsibility to have oversight of the Service Plan priority to achieve efficiency savings should refer to savings "at a level agreed by the Authority" rather than to the specific sum of £1.5m savings per year. This is intended to give greater flexibility for savings targets considering the current and likely future financial climate. The second is to shorten the paragraph in the HR Committee's terms of reference regarding appeals, by deleting the words "(This is to include hearing of appeals relating to individual dismissals and grievances and collective disputes)". The Chief Fire Officer considers that the inclusion of these words may cause confusion by suggesting that the remit of the HR Committee, to consider and determine appeals, extends beyond appropriate categories of employees where agreed policies do not allow for matters to be determined by officers. These two further proposed changes have been incorporated in Appendix 2.

3 Conclusions

- 3.1 The process of reviewing the Authority's committee structure and terms of reference has been a healthy one, with all members engaging in discussion about the role that they play in the Authority's overall governance arrangements. As a result of this, a number of suggested improvements have been made, to give greater clarification where necessary and ensure that the Authority's governance arrangements remain fit for purpose, in the light of current and future challenges. The proposals make greater provision for effective member involvement in strategic planning and scrutiny of performance, in relation to Service Plan priorities and the securing of better outcomes for local people.

4 Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1 An impact assessment has been made on the proposals in the paper and shown that they are not discriminatory. They are considered compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

Section 100D – Local Government Act 1972 – background papers

The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report.

N.B. The list excludes:

Published works.

Documents that disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.

TITLE

Report to Governance Committee dated 20 November 2009

FILE

Available on the Authority's website:

<http://www.hants.gov.uk/decisions/decisions-docs/091120-fgctte-R1113120225.html>

4gR1360510