

9. Allocation of Seats to Political Groups and Appointments to Committees

Purpose of report

1. Subject to the agreement of proposed changes to the Committee structure following the Governance Review, this paper requests that consideration is given to the appointments to the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Authority's Committees and to the allocation of seats on Committees to political groups. It also recommends that the Clerk is authorised, following consultation with the respective Group Leaders, to make appointments to Committees.

Recommendations

The Clerk recommends that:

- i) ***the Authority considers appointments to the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Authority's Committees;***
- ii) ***two Members be appointed the Authority's representatives on the Standards Committee and two Members appointed as named substitutes;***
- iii) ***the Clerk be authorised following consultation with the respective Group Leaders to take any necessary action to give effect to proportionality requirements, determine the numbers of seats on Committees and make appointments to those Committees and other bodies in accordance with the wishes of the Group Leaders;***
- iv) ***appointments to the Member Champion roles for Asset Management, Equality & Diversity and Risk Management be considered.***

Background

2. In accordance with the Hereford & Worcester Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1997 the Authority's membership comprises 25 Councillors, 19 from Worcestershire County Council and 6 from Herefordshire Council.
3. Both Herefordshire Council's appointments and Worcestershire County Council's appointments were made for the life of their respective Councils. (The Herefordshire Councillors were appointed in May 2007 for a four year term and the Worcestershire County Councillors were appointed on 25 June 2009, also for a four year term.)
4. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires that where "a Council" holds an Annual Meeting it shall review the allocation of seats to political groups either at that meeting or as soon as practical thereafter. However, in light of the Governance Review and as the political balance of the Authority remained unchanged since June 2009, it was agreed by the Authority at its meeting on 25 June 2010 that the current allocation of seats on Committees to political groups and the current membership of Committees was maintained until the Authority meeting on 28 September 2010.

Committee Appointments

5. The recommendations from the first tranche of the Governance Review, focussing on the Committee structure, have been considered by the Authority elsewhere on the agenda, and subject to the agreement of the proposed changes, the Authority is requested to review the allocation of seats on the basis of political proportionality.
6. Subject to the agreement of the recommendations following the Governance Review, the Authority has established the following Committees:
 - Appointments Committee (11 seats: 8 Conservative, 2 Liberal Democrat/Liberal, 1 Independent/Labour)
 - Audit Committee (10 seats: 7 Conservative, 2 Liberal Democrat/Liberal, 1 Independent/Labour)
 - Policy & Resources Committee (15 seats: 11 Conservative, 2 Liberal Democrat/Liberal, 2 Independent/Labour)
 - Standards Committee (5 Independent Members, 2 Authority seats)
7. The Authority has generally appointed the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees (with the exception of Standards Committee) at its Annual General Meeting and therefore is recommended to do so at this meeting.
8. The Authority also appoints a Standards Committee comprising five independent persons, (Mr C Emeny, Mr R Gething, Dr M Mylechreest, Mr R Rogers and Mr D Stevens); and two Members of the Authority: (currently Mr J Goodwin and Mrs G Hopkins), each of whom it was agreed should have a named substitute.
9. The proposed terms of reference of the Committees outlined in paragraph 7 are attached at agenda item No. 8 for Members' information.
10. Members should note the following rules governing Committee appointments:
 - The Chair, Vice-Chair, out-going Chair of the Authority and Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee are not eligible to serve on the Audit Committee.
 - Group Leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority are not eligible to serve on the Standards Committee.
11. A Members' Steering Group has also previously been appointed as an informal advisory body to work with Officers on the development of the Integrated Risk Management Plan, comprising Group Leaders and Committee Chairs. This Group will feed into the proposed Policy & Resources Committee, subject to agreement of the recommendations put forward by the Governance Review Group.

Member Champions

12. The Authority currently has several Members that have previously been nominated as Lead Members (Member Champions) for various areas of Authority business. The following Members were previously nominated:
- Asset Management Champion - Cllr Derek Prodger
 - Equality & Diversity Champion – Cllr Richard Udall
 - Risk Management Champion – Cllr Peter Watts
13. Further information regarding the role of Member Champions is attached at Appendix 2. It is advised that the Risk Management Champion also has a seat on the Audit Committee to help strengthen the role of the Committee in respect of its role in risk management and assurance.

Conclusion/Summary

14. Subject to the agreement of proposed changes to the Committee structure following the Governance Review, this paper requests that consideration is given to the appointments to the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Authority's Committees and to the allocation of seats on Committees to political groups. It also recommends that the Clerk is authorised following consultation with Group Leaders to make appointments to Committees.

Corporate Considerations

15. A Business Impact Analysis form is attached at Appendix 1 to measure and address the proposals contained in this report. The form contains information on the potential resource implications, legal issues, strategic policy links, equality/ethical issues and risk management implications.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Business Impact Analysis

Appendix 2 – The Role of Member Champions

Background papers

FRA Papers – 25 June 2010

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