

Report of Monitoring Officer

Review of Committee Names & Terms of Reference

Purpose of report

1. To review the names and terms of reference of the Authority's committees, as requested at the Authority meeting on 25th June 2025.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that no further changes are necessary to the names of either Audit, Scrutiny & Standards Committee or Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee nor to their respective terms of reference.

Introduction and Background

2. In order to better reflect the important role of the Authority's two principal committees in undertaking scrutiny and holding senior officers to account, it was agreed at the Authority meeting on 25th June that:
 - (i) the names of the committees be changed to:
Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee; and
Audit, Scrutiny & Standards Committee
 - (ii) This Committee was asked to further review the choice of names along with the terms of reference for the two committees to ensure that they fully reflect the scrutiny role.

What is Scrutiny

3. The process of scrutinising something can perhaps be defined best as *to examine carefully or critically; to investigate*. In the context of a local authority, scrutiny usually means scrutinising the decisions of the council's cabinet or executive. Within a Fire Authority, it means reviewing the performance of the Service and holding senior officers to account for that performance.
4. Scrutiny has always been at the heart of members' role within the Fire Authority. Regardless of whether that term has been used explicitly, whenever members receive reports that are for information or to provide an update without requiring a substantive decision, then by the very nature of the report members are exercising a scrutiny function.

5. The extent of the scrutiny role can be seen in the following table. Having reviewed all the meetings during 2024/25, the number of items brought to members for scrutiny as opposed to items for decision, was as follows:

	For Decision	For Information /Scrutiny
Full Authority	11 (52%)	10 (48%)
Policy & Resources	2 (14%)	12 (86%)
Audit & Standards	3 (12%)	21 (88%)
Overall	16 (27%)	43 (73%)

Why Change the Committee names

6. The names of committees should obviously give a broad indication of the role and purpose of that committee to assist in understanding it's role. Inspections by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) will in future include a review of governance arrangements, including how senior officers are scrutinised and held to account. In that context, changing the Committee names to better emphasise the scrutiny role is undoubtedly helpful.
7. Equally however Committee names need to be reasonably succinct. They do not need to include a full list of all the matters within the Committee's remit otherwise the name would soon be unwieldy. The name is for ease of reference but it is not, of itself, determinative of the committee's functions. Those are set out in the terms of reference.
8. There is a certain amount of work involved in changing the name of a committee including updating the website, changing the committee and agenda templates, updating the constitution and associated cross-references.

Terms of Reference

9. Copies of the terms of reference for both Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee and Audit, Scrutiny & Standards Committee are attached as appendices. These were reviewed earlier this year as part of the changes to the Constitution approved in June. The full Authority was essentially asking this Committee to review whether any further changes were desirable in order to fully reflect the committees' scrutiny roles.

Conclusions

10. The changes to committee names agreed at the last full authority meeting provided clarity by emphasising the essential role members have in providing scrutiny and holding senior officers to account.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Any further changes to the names of committees would involve a degree of administrative workload
Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)	The current committee names and terms of reference aid the understanding of the essential role members play in scrutinising the performance of the Service and holding senior officers to account
Productivity & Efficiency (Identify how proposal improves productivity or efficiency).	None
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	n/a
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	n/a
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	n/a
Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	None

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 Terms of Reference – Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee
 Appendix 2 Terms of Reference – Audit, Scrutiny & Standards Committee

Background papers – Report and minutes – Fire Authority

POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference, Constitution, Rules and Procedures

Role

The Committee will:

1. Make recommendations as to:
 - the Authority's strategic policies and objectives;
 - annual budget, medium term financial plan and precept;
 - community risk management plan and any fire cover review, and monitor progress with implementation when approved; and
 - the Scheme of Delegations to Officers.
2. Scrutinise and review financial performance including revenue and capital budgets, treasury management, the use of resources and fees and charges (adopting any changes to fees and charges where necessary on behalf of the Authority) to ensure that the Authority's financial plans are affordable.
3. Authorise capital and revenue virements in excess of limits delegated to the Treasurer and Chief Fire Officer and to authorise capital re-phasing where necessary.
4. Scrutinise and review key operational performance targets; ensure the Authority has an effective performance management framework in place and that performance is meeting the Authority's objectives and targets.
5. Hold senior officers to account for delivery of the policies, objectives and targets falling within the Committee's remit
6. Determine the Authority's Asset Management Plan and any matter relating to the Authority's land holdings or buildings and structures which is not delegated to officers.
7. Approval of capital projects and purchase of supplies, vehicles and services in accordance with the agreed budget and medium term financial plan
8. Authorise the waiver of tender rules in accordance with Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, where necessary.
9. Approve, scrutinise and amend any strategic policy not reserved for the Authority or that falls within the remit of another Committee.
10. To settle any claim or uninsured claim against or by the Authority when the sum is above the limit of officer delegation.
11. Approve, scrutinise and review of the following matters in relation to staff:
 - a) the implications of the adoption of nationally agreed conditions of

service;

- b) regular reports from the Joint Consultative Committee
 - c) agreement to the premature retirement of any employee where this is in the interests of the efficient exercise of the functions of the Authority, or by reason of redundancy, including the power to grant added years' service reckonable for superannuation purposes;
 - d) responsibility for exercising the discretionary elements of the Local Government Pension Scheme, including the authority for incurring any costs involved; and
 - e) amendments to duty systems worked on fire stations.
12. Consider and approve responses to consultation papers issued by Government and other organisations.
13. Any other matter not reserved to the Authority or falling within the remit of any other Committee nor delegated to an officer.

Constitution

14. The Committee will comprise 13 Members.
15. In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, political balance will apply.
16. The quorum of the Committee will be 5 Members.
17. Subject to the approval of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Authority, the Committee may establish non-politically balanced, time-limited Task and Finish Groups to investigate issues within terms of reference set by the Committee. Only one Task and Finish Group may be established by the Committee at any one time.

Rules and Procedures

18. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman will be elected by the Authority (except where the Committee elects one of the members from its own ranks to fill any casual vacancy that arises)
19. The Committee will meet at least four times a year.
20. The Committee Chairman will report proceedings of the Committee to the Authority.
21. The minutes and reports of the Committee will be available for public inspection, except those documents classified as exempt.
22. The Committee will be advised by the Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer,

Monitoring Officer and other officers and advisors as necessary.

23. Meetings will normally be held in public, with the right of attendance for all Members, public and press, except during consideration of exempt business.
24. An agenda, together with reports, will be made available at least five clear working days before each formal meeting.

AUDIT, SCRUTINY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference, Constitution, Rules and Procedures

Role

The Committee will:

1. Ensure processes are in place to deliver effective controls and audit functions, including agreement of the Internal Audit Plan, appointment of External Auditors and consideration of External Audit fees and External Audit Plans.
2. Scrutinise external and internal auditors' reports and the adequacy of management response to auditors' advice, recommendations and action plans.
3. Scrutinise reports regarding the management and performance of Internal Audit.
4. Consider the External Audit Annual Letter, making recommendations to the Authority where necessary and monitor the Authority's response.
5. Scrutinise the results of external reviews of the Authority's services, including those by HMICFRS, ensuring progress is made on actions planned to remedy any significant issues highlighted.
6. Consider an annual report regarding compliments, complaints and concerns about the Service.
7. Consider, scrutinise and review the development and operation of the Authority's risk management and corporate governance arrangements in accordance with best practice.
8. Exercise delegated power in relation to the approval of the Annual Statement of Accounts.
9. Exercise delegated power in relation to the consideration of the Annual Governance Statement, the procedures followed in its compilation and the appropriateness of supporting documentation, addressing any significant governance weaknesses disclosed within the Statement.
10. Consider and make recommendations to the Authority on:
 - the Annual Assurance Statement;
 - Standing Orders and Financial Regulations of the Authority;
 - Committee Structure, Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation;
 - Members' Code of Conduct; and
 - Protocol for Member-Officer Relations.
11. Formulate and approve policy documentation in respect of: Strategic Risk, Whistleblowing and Anti-Fraud and Corruption processes and review the effectiveness of their application throughout the Authority.

12. Approve the adoption of policies which contribute towards maintaining a positive organisational culture and scrutinise their performance including:
 - Health and safety (including receiving regular reports from the Health & safety Committee)
 - Staff well-being
 - Employment monitoring;
 - Equalities, inclusion and diversity; and
 - Organisational culture
- 13.. Hold senior officers to account for delivery of the objectives and targets falling within the Committee's remit
14. Promote and maintain high standards of conduct and ethical governance by Members and co-opted Members of the Authority.
15. Oversee the Registers of Members' Interests and keep under review the Authority's procedures for investigating and responding to complaints about Members.
16. Monitor the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct and assist Members and where appropriate, co-opted Members to observe the Code.
17. Advise, train or arrange to train the Members and co-opted Members of the Authority on matters relating to the Member Code of Conduct.
18. Grant dispensations to Members, from requirements relating to interests set out in the Member Code of Conduct, as referred by the Monitoring Officer.
19. Receive reports and comment on complaints procedures and/or reports from the Local Government Ombudsman.
20. Appoint Independent Persons for the purposes of the ethical framework under the Localism Act 2011.

Constitution

21. The Committee will comprise 12 Members.
22. In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, political balance will apply.
23. Group Leaders, the Chairman, Vice-Chairman of the Authority, outgoing Chairman of the Authority and Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee are not eligible to serve on the Audit, Scrutiny & Standards Committee.
24. The quorum of the Committee will be 4 Members.
25. Subject to the approval of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Authority, the Committee may establish non-politically balanced, time- limited Task and Finish Groups to investigate issues within terms of reference set by the Committee. Only one Task and Finish Group may be established by the Committee at any one time.

Rules and Procedures

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27. The Committee Chairman will report proceedings of the Committee to the Authority.
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