

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

Purpose of report

1. To consider the allocation of seats on Committees to political groups and to authorise the Clerk following consultation with Group Leaders to make appointments to Committees and other bodies.

Recommendations

The Clerk recommends that:

- i) the Authority considers appointments to the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the following Committees:*
 - a. Appointments Committee*
 - b. Audit Committee*
 - c. Policy and Resources Committee;*
- ii) two Members be appointed the Authority's representatives on the Standards Committee and two Members appointed as named substitutes;*
- iii) Members be appointed to the Member Champion roles for Asset Management, Equality and Diversity and Risk Management;*
- iv) one representative from each political group be nominated as a Member Development Champion;*
- v) the Clerk be authorised following consultation with 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;*
- vi) the Authority determines whether it wishes to adhere to its previous view that representation and voting on the Local Government Association be as follows:*
 - a. that the Authority's representatives on the Local Government Association should be the Group Leaders or their nominees;*
 - b. that the 13 Service votes on the Local Government Association Assembly be allocated between its representatives on a politically proportionate basis; and*
 - c. the corporate vote on the Local Government Association Assembly be exercised by the Chairman or his nominee.*

vii) the Authority determines whether it wishes the Chairman or his nominee to hold the place and vote available to the Authority on the LGA's Fire Commission; and

viii) the Authority determines whether it wishes to appoint the Chair, Vice-Chair or other nominee to the Worcestershire Partnership Board.

Introduction and 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 2011 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.

Committee Appointments

5. 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.
6. 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: (previously Mr D Greenow and Mrs G Hopkins), each of whom it was agreed should have a named substitute. Members will be aware of the changes to the current Standards regime that will come into effect from 1 July 2012. The new proposals are due to be considered elsewhere on the agenda. However, the current Standards Committee will still need to be in place until that date and the Authority is requested to make Member appointments, as set out in the recommendations.
7. Members should note the following rules governing Committee appointments:
 - i. The Chair, Vice-Chair, out-going Chair of the Authority and Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee are not eligible to serve on the Audit Committee.
 - ii. Group Leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority are not eligible to serve on the Standards Committee.

(The current Committee membership is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' information).

8. It is noted that feedback from Members has suggested the number of seats on the Appointments Committee should be reduced. It is likely that the new Head of Legal Services (in consultation with Group Leaders) will review the effectiveness of the current Committee structure which would incorporate consideration of this issue.

Member Champions

9. The Authority currently has several Members that have previously been nominated as Lead Members (Member Champions) for various areas of Authority business.
10. The following Members were previously nominated:
 - i. Asset Management Champion - Cllr Liz Eyre
 - ii. Equality & Diversity Champion – Cllr Richard Udall
 - iii. Risk Management Champion – Cllr Peter Watts
 - iv. Member Development – Cllr Lucy Hodgson, Cllr Clive Smith and Cllr David Taylor

Outside Bodies to which the Authority makes Appointments

Local Government Association Appointments

11. All Fire and Rescue Authorities are entitled to a place and a vote on the Local Government Association (LGA) Fire Commission (previously known as the Fire Services Forum). The Authority needs to determine whether it wishes to appoint the Chairman or his nominee to the Commission and exercise the vote on behalf of this Authority.
12. This Authority is also in corporate membership of the LGA. The Authority is entitled to appoint up to 4 representatives to serve on the General Assembly. The Association encourages those authorities entitled to 3 or 4 representatives to allocate one of these positions to minority group leaders on their authorities.
13. Arrangements determined by the Authority on 22 June 2011 allocated places on the General Assembly to the Leaders of the Political Groups on the Authority or their nominees. The Authority needs to determine if it wishes to confirm its decision on how many places it wishes to take up and how those places should be allocated.
14. The LGA constitution provides that Authorities in corporate membership shall be entitled to vote only as follows:
 - a) On the election of a Chair, Vice-Chair and Deputy Chairs and on questions of estimated expenditure and subscriptions each corporate member shall have one vote; and
 - b) On issues of direct relevance to the statutory duties and responsibilities of corporate members of their class (as determined by the Chair of the meeting) each corporate member shall be entitled to the same number of votes as a unitary authority within their population band (meaning that this Authority has 13 votes).

15. On 22 June 2011 the Authority allocated the corporate vote to the Chairman (or his nominee) and divided the 13 Service votes on the basis of proportionality. The Authority needs to determine whether it wishes to adhere to this decision. The Conservative Group currently has 9 votes, the Liberal Democrat/Liberal Group has 2 votes and the Independent/Labour Group has 2 votes.
16. The Authority needs to determine if it wishes to confirm its decision on how many places it wishes to take up and how those places should be allocated. The next meeting of the LGA General Assembly and LGA Annual Conference will take place on 26-28 June 2012 in Birmingham.

Partnership Boards

17. The Authority is entitled to appoint a Member to the Worcestershire Partnership Board. The Terms of Reference of the Partnership recommends the appointment of the Authority Chair or Vice-Chair.

Conclusion/Summary

18. The above arrangements have proven to be effective for the appointment of Committees to carry out the functions of the Authority, as specified in the Terms of Reference, and for appointments to outside bodies, and the Clerk recommends that the Authority continue this practice, as set out above.

Financial Considerations

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are financial issues that require consideration	N	

Legal Considerations

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are legal issues e.g. contractual and procurement, reputational issues that require consideration	Y	Whole report

Additional Considerations

19. The table below sets out any additional issues arising from the proposals contained in this report and identifies the relevant paragraphs in the report where such issues are addressed.

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
Resources (e.g. Assets, ICT, Human Resources, Training & Development, Sustainability).	Y	Need to ensure Members appointed can properly fulfil the roles – whole Report
Strategic Policy Links (e.g. IRMP, Authority Plan, Equality & Diversity, Partnerships, Environmental Impact).	N	
Risk Management / Health & Safety (e.g. risk management and control measures, risk register score).	Y	Members appointed should be able to fulfil the duties of their roles –whole Report
Consultation with Representative Bodies	N	

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Committees and Membership as currently constituted.

Appendix 2 – The Role of the Member Champion

Contact Officer

Mrs Anne Brown, Clerk to the Authority

Tel: 08451224454

Email: abrown@hwfire.org.uk