Appendix 1

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority
Audit Committee

Tuesday, 18 August 2026, at 10.00 am in the Main Conference Room, Service Headquarters, Fulwood.

Minutes

Present:	
Councillors	
A Blake	
B Langford	
U Arif (Vice-Chair)	
A Joynes	
J Ash	
P Buckley	
M Clifford (Chair)	

Officers
S Collinson, Assistant Director - Communications and Engagement (LFRS) D Howell, Monitoring Officer S Hunter, Member Services Manager J Kelly, Member Services Officer (LFRS)
In attendance

14-26/27	**Apologies for Absence**
	There were apologies from the following: County Councillor Usman Arif had been delayed.
15-26/27	**Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**
	None received.
16-26/27	**New Constitution**
	The Monitoring Officer (MO) introduced the item. It was noted that a separate working group had been set up to revise and update the constitution for Lancashire Combined Fire Authority; the group had met several

times to work up the draft document which was also externally assured by an experienced monitoring officer. The MO indicated that the draft constitution was in alignment with best practice from other authorities and existing legislation.

The final draft comprised of three main sections: a scheme of delegation; terms of reference for the various committees and standing orders which set out the technical details about how matters would be dealt with. There were also several other miscellaneous documents which completed the picture.

It was noted that further changes might be required in due course following the constitution's implementation. The document would be reviewed regularly, at least on an annual basis. Local government reorganisation would also mean that certain sections would need to be re-visited once the new unitary authorities were in place.

The following sections of the constitution were particularly significant or had undergone major revision. The Chair indicated that the best course of action in the meeting was to discuss the main changes. The purpose of this extraordinary Audit Committee was to review the current draft document prior to its submission at the September 2026 full CFA meeting for approval.

Scheme of delegation

National guidance on a fire authority's scheme of delegation and legislation about operational independence of Chief Fire Officers was known to be in development. However, this was not currently available and there was no clarity as to when it would be finalised. The new scheme of delegation had been drafted so far as possible to take into account anticipated requirements of any such guidance, and schemes of delegation from a number of other authorities had been reviewed in order to distil best practice.

Paragraph 6 (page 5 of the constitution) set out the matters that were reserved to the full authority These were the high level, strategic matters such as budget setting and overall direction of the fire service.

Other matters were delegated to one of the three statutory officers (Chief Fire Officer; Treasurer and Monitoring Officer). Once the authority set the strategic direction, the discharge of these duties at an operational level would then be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer.

It was not intended that this revised scheme of delegation would make any significant change to the current split of decision-making abilities between the authority and the service, but rather it simplified and clarified what was previously a lengthy and technical document. Of note, paragraphs 8 to 12 set out general principles of delegation which should ensure that no issue which should be considered by the Authority would be able to by-pass that crucial oversight and governance.

It was noted that any major changes to the constitution (for example to the terms of reference) would need to be submitted to the full Authority for approval, but minor, grammatical, non-substantive changes or those to align the document with updated legislation would be made by the MO.

The MO referred to item 6 (page 5) and the decisions which were reserved to the full Authority.

It was noted that, in line with best practice, an appointments committee would be set up for senior level appointments.

County Councillor A Joynes asked if the anticipated government white paper was likely to generate further changes to the draft constitution. The MO confirmed that this was possible, but it was hoped that the current draft covered the anticipated direction of travel, though further tweaks might be needed.

County Councillor P Buckley thanked the MO for the work that had been undertaken on the constitution review to date. County Councillor P Buckley indicated he had shared some slight anomalies he had recently found with the Chair and MO prior to this meeting as a further check and balance. It was agreed that these be considered by the MO outside the meeting. The MO indicated that he would subsequently feedback any final revisions to the Constitution Working Group via email. The committee agreed on this course of action subject to the revisions not being major ones.

The MO took the committee through the sections of the constitution which related to the general and specific principles of delegation to officers, the major area being delegation to the Chief Fire Officer (page 8).

County Councillor B Langford commented on section 16.6 regarding the CFO's power to use expenditure of up to £200,000, outside of budget, in each financial year and asked in what circumstances this would be used and how it would be reported upon for the purposes of transparency. The Assistant Director of Communications and Engagement (ADCE) confirmed that the expenditure was often used for emergency incidents and there would be consultation with the Chair in that circumstance. The MO agreed to amend this section and the committee agreed for a standing agenda item to be added to the Audit Committee terms of reference to facilitate reporting on this expenditure. County Councillor B Langford commented that tracking outside budget spend could also be helpful in terms of future budget setting.

Committee and working group terms of reference

In the main, these had not changed significantly but the following key changes were noted:

- Audit Committee had been re-named to Audit, Risk and Governance with the addition of a function determining member complaints (under the section on standards) and the addition of an independent person which would in due course be a legislative requirement. The MO shared that interviews were due to take place next month for the appointment of an independent person to this committee. It was also noted that the Audit, Risk and Governance Committee would have the authority to change minor matters relating to the constitution.

	• Performance Committee - the ADCE shared that the Planning Committee had previously asked the Performance Committee to undertake an annual review of KPI 3:3 on Fire Engine Availability. This had been taking place but the Performance Committee had agreed at the 13 July 2026 Performance Committee meeting that they were comfortable that this could be removed as an annual item and monitored through the Measuring Progress report. Section 3.2 (on page 17) would therefore now be removed from the committee terms of reference. • Planning Committee - the MO indicated that the committee dealt with many major items but most of these were fed through to the full Authority for approval. • Resources Committee - the MO highlighted the addition of approval of severance payments above £100,000; removal of appointments to the Executive Board (appointments of statutory officers would be dealt with by an appointments committee formed by Authority members, all other appointments were now delegated to the Chief Fire Officer). Pension appeals had also been removed from this committee. • Appeals Committee - As noted above, there had been the addition of pensions appeals, Internal Disputes Resolution Procedures (IDRP 2) which were previously heard by Resources Committee. There had also been the addition of hearing appeals from Audit relating to member complaint matters. County Councillor U Arif asked whether member training would be available for those with a role on this committee who did not have previous relevant background knowledge or experience, this suggestion would be raised at the Member Training and Development Working Group. • Appointments Committee - This was a new committee and would deal with the appointment of the three statutory officers. It was noted there was also now a standing order which dealt with disciplinary action including dismissal of the statutory officers. Subject to political balance rules, the committee would include both the Chair and Vice Chair of the full Authority. County Councillor B Langford raised a query regarding section 5 which stated that the CFO would act as advisor to the appointments committee. He asked if it be better practice to make the advisor independent of the Executive Board. The MO indicated that there would generally be representation from HR on the appointments committee too, the Chair provided reassurance that a similar practice was the case at Lancashire County Council (LCC) and worked well. County Councillor J Ash asked if the wording of section 11 (page 26) could be made clearer – the MO agreed to add a comma after the word ‘members’. County Councillor A Blake then raised a matter relating to Standing Order 5 (page 45) and asked if this was reflective of the process used at the most recent CFA meeting in June 2026 for the election of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority.

The MO indicated the starting point was a show of hands for a named vote, but this could then lead to a vote by show of hands for an anonymous ballot. It was intended that the section on page 41 (Standing Order 5 – Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Combined Fire Authority) would clarify this process. Members discussed the voting process used at the previous CFA meeting in June 2026 and the advantages and disadvantages of different voting methods. The MO referred members to Standing Order 7 (page 50) and the details provided regarding recorded (named) voting and anonymous ballots. Members commented that a named vote did not need to be agreed by a majority at LCC (it could be agreed by 6) and that this seemed to be standard for local government. A change was suggested to the wording of sections 43 and 45 on page 50 to take out the word 'majority' and to replace this with 5 members' votes. There was discussion over whether priority would be given to a request for a named or anonymous vote depending on which was requested first. It was agreed that the MO would try to source best practice on this matter of sequencing and feedback to working group members.

The Chair suggested and it was agreed by members of the committee that there could be a default position for anonymous voting for the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair at the CFA Annual General Meeting (AGM).

- Strategy Forum - members noted a change of name from Strategy Group to Strategy Forum. It was noted that this was not a committee as the forum did not make decisions and was a private meeting. Feedback from each forum meeting would be presented to the next CFA meeting.

- Capital Building Projects Working Group - The terms of reference had been streamlined and it was clarified that the group would make recommendations into the relevant decision-making committee or the full Authority.

Standing Orders

Standing orders (SOs) 1 to 8 dealt with the specifics of how meetings would run. These were revised to reflect best practice and existing legislation.

Attention was drawn by the MO to section 11 of SO1 which the Constitution Working Group had felt important to retain.

A suggestion was raised by County Councillor U Arif regarding the term of office for members serving as Chair or Vice Chair. It was felt that these positions could require some time for members to become fully established in their roles. Therefore, he suggested that consideration be given to extending the term of office to 2 years so that the CFA could benefit from greater stability and continuity in these key positions. The MO and Chair explained that this was not within the CFA control, that home authorities determined membership of the CFA and political balance could also change from year to year. The MO indicated that the term of the Chair and Vice Chair was only set for 12 months and this was set out in legislation and could not be changed.

County Councillor A Blake asked whether there would be any impact to membership of the CFA after the shadow local government elections took place in 2027. The MO indicated this would not have any impact on the CFA until 2028.

SO3 was new and related to replacement and temporary members. The point was made by the Chair that members should not sit on both Resources and Audit, did this need to be stated here or would that be overly prescriptive. The MO indicated that the restriction was documented within the committee terms of reference.

SO7 had been extensively reviewed and was intended to be comprehensive but may need some modification in practice.

SO8 was also new and related to the urgent business procedure. The other SOs had been re-worked and were amended versions of SOs that were already in place.

SO9 was drafted with input from HR and had been approved earlier in the year by the full Authority.

Miscellaneous

The member complaints procedure was new and outlined a detailed procedure for dealing with any complaints. The members' code of conduct and relevant appendices were noted.

With regards to the member champion roles (page 106), the addition of item 7 was noted as a suggestion from County Councillor P Buckley at a previous working group meeting and was regarding engagement with relevant partners.

The member's allowance scheme (page 250 onwards) had been amended to add a dependents' carers' allowance and also an allowance for the Audit Committee independent person. A special responsibility allowance had been added for the leader of the ruling group if they were not also Chair or Vice-Chair of the authority and it was now clarified that it was possible to have more than one Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA).

In terms of Members' Allowance Scheme Schedule 'B' – Travel and Subsistence Allowances, it was noted that the mileage rate had been increased. There was also discussion of which expenses were taxable.

In terms of the new Appointments Committee, there was discussion as to whether an SRA should apply, given it would only meet infrequently. It was proposed by the Chair that there was no SRA applied, this was seconded by County Councillor P Buckley and agreed unanimously by members.

The MO raised some anomalies with regards to SRAs for the various working groups and asked members to decide whether these should remain as they were, be standardised or removed. It was agreed that the SRAs would remain for the Appeals Committee and the Member Training and Development Working Group but would not be applied for the Capital Building Projects Working Group.

	This brought the meeting to the end of the constitution document. The MO clarified that any further amendments would be sent to the working group via email ahead of the document being taken to the full Authority meeting in September 2026. **Resolved: -** That the Committee; Reviewed the final draft of the constitution and made necessary recommendations for further amendments before the document was sent to the full authority meeting on 21 September 2026 for approval and adoption.
17-26/27	**Date of Next Meeting**
	The next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 1 October 2026 at 10:00 hours in the Main Conference Room at Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Fulwood. Further meeting dates were noted for 15 December 2026 and agreed for 25 March 2027.

D Howell
Monitoring Officer to CFA

LFRS HQ
Fulwood