

LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

Meeting to be held on 22 February 2021

REPORT ON REVIEW OF THE AUTHORITY'S GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL POLICIES

(Appendices 1 – 5 refer)

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

The Clerk to the Authority agreed to undertake a review of various constitutional and procedural governance policies and the corresponding Constitutional and Procedural Standing Orders to bring them in line with changes to legislation and to promote continuing best local government practice and to sustain and support the current needs of the Authority.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the proposed changes outlined in the report and endorse those changes as amendments to the Authority's policies and to its corresponding Constitutional and Procedural Standing Orders.

Information

The Clerk to the Authority has completed a comprehensive Review of the relevant governance and procedural policies of the Authority to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and are up to date with any changes to legislation. The Clerk was also mindful the publication of the Evans Committee Report on Standards in Public Life in January 2019 and after noting some anomalies within in Standing Orders to relevant numbered paragraphs of the current Members Code of Conduct, which no longer existed in the most recent version of the Code, it was apparent there was a disconnection between those relevant Standing Orders and the current Code of Conduct.

A Review of policies against recent developments in governance legislation and good practice had not been undertaken thoroughly since 2014, when the current version of the Member's Code of Conduct was approved by the Authority.

Of the policies reviewed by the Clerk to the Authority, the following items have in all but one case undergone minor amendments:

1. Code of Conduct for Fire Authority Members;
2. The Role of Members (Appendix 1 to the Member Training and Development Strategy and Generic Member Champions - Role Description (Appendix 2 to the Member Training and Development Strategy));

3. Members Allowance Scheme;
4. Member Officer Relations Protocol;
5. Constitutional and Procedural Standing Orders.

The only significant change in terms of content relates to the current Members Code of Conduct. Draft changes were made by the Clerk to the Authority last year following the publication of the Evans Report, with many of those recommendations being incorporated in to a draft, which was due to be tabled at the Meeting of the Authority in September 2020.

Meanwhile the Local Government Association ('LGA') initiated a nationwide consultation on a draft version of the Model Code of Conduct at a similar time. The Clerk therefore considered it prudent to await the outcome of the national consultation.

After processing the feedback the LGA Leadership Board met to conclude its agreement to a final model. The final Model Code was published on 23 December 2020. The Model Code is not quite as far reaching as the Evans Committee recommendations but remains consistent with the current Authority Code of Conduct, with some relevant updates.

The Current Code of Conduct and the proposed adaptation based on the LGA Model are to be found **(in Appendix 1a and 1b, respectively,)** attached to the report for Members to compare and contrast.

As Members will be very experienced and proficient in the levels of self-regulation expected of them in public office within their own primary authority, it is not anticipated that the request to endorse these proposals will present any unwelcome challenges. The Clerk will be on hand to chat through any concerns and provide as much support as is necessary, either individually in private or collectively through Members' respective leaders.

All other proposed changes to policy are sufficiently minor to be represented as being highlighted with tracked changes in the respective new documents **(and are at Appendices 2-5.)** Again should there be any concerns then the Clerk to the Authority will happily answer them.

If one or more proposed changes cannot be ratified at this stage then they will be stood down for further discussion and tabled at a subsequent Meeting of the Authority.

Financial Implications

None

Sustainability or Environmental Impact

None

Equality and Diversity Implications

None

Human Resources Implications

None

Business Risk Implications

None

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact
Revised Protocol on Member/Officer Relations	20.06.11	Clerk to the Authority
Constitutional and Procedural Standing Orders. Approved: CFA Minutes	18.06.12	Clerk to the Authority
Members Code of Conduct. Approved: CFA Minutes	10.02.14	Clerk to the Authority
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate: n/a		