

Governance Committee

6 November 2023 – At a meeting of the Governance Committee held at 2.15 pm at County Hall, Chichester PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Bradbury (Chairman)

Cllr Burrett, Cllr A Jupp, Cllr Lord, Cllr Marshall, Cllr O'Kelly, Cllr Waight and Cllr Sparkes

Apologies were received from Cllr Wickremaratchi and Cllr Oxlade

Part I

16. Declarations of Interest

16.1 Cllr Burrett declared an interest in the items on the Pension Advisory Board Chairman recruitment as a deferred Member of the West Sussex Local Government Pension Scheme.

17. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

17.1 Cllr Burrett requested a change to the third sentence of minute 11.8 to read 'Cllr Burrett commented' rather than 'He commented' so it was clear the comment was by Cllr Burrett and not the Chairman.

17.2 Resolved – That, with the amendment set out in minute 17.1 above, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2023 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

18. Pension Advisory Board Chairman Recruitment

18.1 The Committee was informed that the appointment of the current Pension Advisory Board Independent Chairman expires on 31 May 2024 and that the Chairman has indicated that he is not planning on applying for the position again due to retirement. The Committee therefore considered a report by the Director of Finance and Support Services and the Director of Law and Assurance (copy appended to the signed minutes) on proposals for recruiting to the chairmanship of the Board.

18.2 The Chairman informed members that he had requested that the version of the report which goes to Council for approval makes it explicit that there will be a review meeting with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Governance Committee before the interview process to review applications.

18.3 Cllr Burrett commented that the job description attached to the report at Appendix 1 is written as a mixture of second and third person. The Committee agreed it would be better if that inconsistency was removed.

18.4 Members were reassured that the revised procedure put forward in the report is in accord with the practices of other local authorities.

18.5 Resolved -

- (1) That, subject to the text being written in the second or third person rather than a mixture of both, the Job Description for the Independent Chairman, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved; and
- (2) That the Director of Finance and Support Services and the Director of Law and Assurance:
 - (a) Arrange for the role of Independent Chairman to the West Sussex Pension Advisory Board to be advertised with the remuneration set out in paragraph 2.5 of the report and for an appropriate recruitment exercise to be undertaken; and
 - (b) In consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Governance Committee, appoint the Independent Chairman of the West Sussex Pension Advisory Board.

19. Minor revisions to the Constitution

19.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Assurance on minor revisions to the Constitution for recommendation to the County Council (copy appended to the signed minutes).

19.2 In line with the discussion under the last item about the recruitment of a Chairman for the Pension Advisory Board, members were informed of additional wording to be added to the amendment to the job description of the Chairman of the Pension Advisory Board, as set out in Appendix 1. On page 20, at the end of the current additional text in bold italics in the third bullet point the words 'to include a meeting prior to the interviews proceeding' should be inserted.

19.3 Cllr Burrett questioned the need to include the amendment to Part 2 of the Constitution in Appendix 1 given that amendments to that section could be made by the Director of Law and Assurance. He also asked if the word 'advise' in the amendment to the terms of reference point 12 of the Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee should read 'recommend to'. It was confirmed that the amendment to Part 2 had been included for the sake of completeness. In relation to the word 'advise', the text matches the wording in the similar terms of reference of the Governance and Standards Committees.

19.4 Resolved – That, subject to the additional wording set out in minute 19.2 above, the County Council be recommended to approve the changes to the Constitution set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

20. Appeals Panel Annual Report 2022/23

20.1 The Committee considered the Annual Report of the Appeals Panel for 2022/23 (copy appended to the signed minutes).

20.2 Resolved – That the Appeals Panel Annual Report 2022/23 be noted.

21. Report of the Member Development Group

21.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Member Development Group (MDG) which contained an update on the member development programme for 2023/24 and on activity undertaken by MDG since the last update to the Committee in June 2023 (copy appended to the signed minutes). In the absence of the MDG Chairman, the report was introduced by Cllr Waight who is a member of MDG.

21.2 Cllr O’Kelly referred to the member development regional round table mentioned in paragraph 3.5 of the report and asked if there had been any particular learning from the meeting. The Head of Democratic Services commented that it had been helpful to compare practice with the two other councils who attended. The most notable difference between those councils and the County Council was that they did not set dates in advance for member sessions but instead arranged ad hoc sessions with at least a month’s notice. At West Sussex the feedback from members is that it is helpful to have dates set in advance. In terms of attendance at any ad hoc sessions that are held, the Head of Democratic Services said there is usually still a reasonable turnout. She commented that the option of hybrid sessions is a useful addition, particularly for short sessions.

21.3 Looking at the attendance details for sessions on page 26 of the report, members felt that in future where sessions, such as visits, had a limit on numbers that should be included in the statistics.

21.4 Cllr Jupp referred to the mandatory training covered in paragraph 2.3 and asked whether MDG felt there should be refresher training during the four-year council term, particularly in relation to safeguarding. The Head of Democratic Services said reminders are put in The Bulletin members’ newsletter with links to online refresher training. She commented that MDG will soon be starting to think about post-election training for the Council elections in May 2025, to include plans for any future training requirements.

21.5 The Committee expressed its thanks for the work of MDG and for the support from officers, particularly in relation to the mandatory training.

21.6 Resolved – That the report be noted.

22. Date of Next Meeting

22.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held at 2.15 pm on 5 February 2024 at County Hall, Chichester. Planned agenda items include:

- Pay Policy Statement

The meeting ended at 2.50 pm

Chairman