



Hampshire & Isle of Wight

FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

HIWFRA Full Authority

Purpose: Approval

Date: **14 SEPTEMBER 2021**

Title: **APPOINTMENTS REPORT AND UPDATES TO HIWFRA
CONSTITUTION**

Report of Monitoring Officer

SUMMARY

1. This report invites the Authority to appoint Catherine Edgecombe as the Authority's Chief Financial Officer with effect from 1 March 2022, following Rob Carr's promotion within Hampshire County Council.
2. The report also seeks the approval of the Authority to proposals in respect of member champions and consequential minor changes to the Constitution.

BACKGROUND

3. The Authority's Terms of Reference at part 3.1 in the Constitution include a requirement:

"To appoint to the positions of Monitoring Officer and **Chief Financial Officer** to the Authority as 'Proper Officers' as set out in the Authority's Scheme of Delegation, Financial Regulations and relevant legislation".
4. At its meeting in February 2021, the Authority (in shadow form) appointed Rob Carr to be the Chief Financial Officer of HIWFRA from 1 April 2021 onwards. Rob Carr and his team have delivered this function for a number of years pursuant to the Authority's shared services partnership with Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Constabulary and others.
5. As a result of the recent appointment of the new Chief Executive at Hampshire County Council, with effect from 19 July 2021 Rob Carr has been promoted to a new role of Director of Operations. As a result, he will no longer be able to undertake the Chief Financial Officer role for HIWFRA.

6. After discussions with the Chairman and the Chief Fire Officer, it is proposed that Catherine Edgcombe (Operational Finance Manager) from the Shared Services Finance Team is appointed as HIWFRA's Chief Financial Officer with effect from 1 March 2022. Catherine Edgcombe has worked as part of Rob Carr's team on HFRA finances and more recently HIWFRA's finances and has the necessary qualifications and experience to undertake the Chief Financial Officer role for the Authority. There would be no changes to the shared service arrangements as a result of Catherine's appointment and the Shared Services Finance Team would continue to provide a full range of financial support to the Authority on the same basis as it currently does.
7. As part of the new arrangements, it is also proposed that the Chief Financial Officer may, as part of normal operations, appoint a Deputy Chief Financial Officer from within the Shared Services Finance Team to provide greater resilience and cover for the more technical planning aspects of the role.

MEMBER CHAMPIONS AND MINOR CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

8. Members of the Authority may from time to time take a lead for the Authority in different areas of the Authority's business ("Member Champions"). This enables individual members to have more detailed involvement in certain areas, develop their own knowledge and act as a link between the Authority and officers in respect of specific projects or programmes.
9. Individual members acting as Member Champions do not have executive authority to make any decisions on behalf of the Authority, as the Authority is not legally able to operate executive arrangements. However, Member Champions can develop greater knowledge of different areas of the Authority's business, act as a sounding board for officers, bring their greater knowledge and experience back to full Authority meetings, and by doing so ensure that the Authority is better able to make decisions at its meetings.
10. Member Champion roles are not formal roles requiring formal appointment by the Authority. Flexibility is needed, as members may undertake a range of different champion roles from time to time, in respect of different issues. In light of this, it is proposed that the Chief Fire Officer be given delegated authority to agree from time to time, in consultation with the Chairman, which members will act as member champions and in respect which specific issues.
11. It is proposed that the minor amendments to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 1 (page 101 Appendix 5 – Protocol for Member – Officer Relations

point 3.4) are approved, in order to reflect the Authority's approach to Member Champions.

12. It is also recommended that minor amendments to the Authority's Constitution are approved, as set out in Appendix A, (page 111 Appendix 8 – The Authority's Key Statutory Responsibilities) to include a reference to the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, which sets out HIWFRA's statutory duties for responding to civil emergencies. This is an existing legislative requirement and has been captured within the Constitution for transparency and good governance purposes.
13. Finally, a minor addition has been made to the Authority's Terms of Reference (page 11 Part 3 – Arrangements to Perform Functions, 3.1 Full Authority Terms of Reference) to include approval of an annual Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement. At this time, as a public body, the Authority is arguably not required by law to produce and publish such a statement, as the statutory requirement is imposed on "commercial organisations" with a turnover of £36m or more. It is not entirely clear whether a public body is caught by the definition of "commercial organisation", however, many public bodies have erred on the side of caution and chosen to publish a statement to demonstrate best practice. Also, the Government has indicated that it may change the legislation to remove any ambiguity. As a public body, doing so voluntarily demonstrates best practice and our commitment to tackling modern slavery through safeguarding and prevention within all corporate activities across our organisational structure, supply chain, procurement processes.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

14. There are no financial or resource implications from the content of this report.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

15. There are no specific equality or other impacts arising from the proposals contained in this paper.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

16. The Authority's appointments and Constitutional arrangements should be kept up to date, in order to ensure lawful decision making and good governance. The proposals in this paper ensure that appropriate appointments are made and that the Authority's governance and constitutional arrangements remain up to date and compliant with Local Government legal requirements.

OPTIONS

17. Option 1 (Recommended) – The Authority is asked to appoint Catherine Edgcombe to the Chief Financial Officer role for the reasons outlined in the report above. Also, that the Authority delegates authority to the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chairman to agree member champions and approves the minor consequential amendments to the Constitution set out at Appendix 1.
18. Option 2 – That HIWFRA does not appoint a new Chief Financial Officer or approve the amendments to the Constitution.

RISK ANALYSIS

19. Option 1 ensures that the Authority continues to have a suitably qualified Chief Financial Officer in accordance with the Constitution. It also ensures that the Constitution reflects the approach to Member Champions and is up to date. It is therefore the preferred option.
20. Option 2 would mean the Authority would no longer have a Chief Financial Officer which could lead to significant risks in respect of financial governance. It would also mean that the Authority's Constitution is not up to date and does not reflect the current operation of the Authority. This could create flaws in the Authority's governance arrangements and ultimately lead to challenges to decision making.

CONCLUSION

21. Option 1 is recommended for the reasons outlined in the report above.

RECOMMENDATIONS

22. That the Authority appoints Catherine Edgcombe as its Chief Financial Officer with effect from 1 March 2022.
23. That the Authority delegates authority to the Chief Financial Officer to appoint a Deputy Chief Financial Officer from within the Shared Services Finance Team.
24. That, the Authority delegates authority to the Chief Fire Officer to agree from time to time, in consultation with the Chairman, for individual members to act as Member Champions in respect of specific matters.
25. That the Authority approves the minor changes to the Constitution set out at Appendix 1.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix 1 - Minor Amendments to the HIWFRA Constitution

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