

Appointment of Independent Members to the Performance & Scrutiny Committee

Report of the Monitoring Officer

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1 Executive Summary

This report seeks Fire Authority ratification of the appointment of three independent members to sit on the Performance and Scrutiny Committee. It also seeks permission for a revised terms of reference for the Committee.

2 Recommendations

Fire Authority is recommended to:

- a) Adopt the revised terms of reference for the Performance & Scrutiny Committee set out at Appendix 1; and
- b) Agree the appointment of Robin Bennett, Yasser Khan and Justine Vaughan to sit as independent members of the Performance & Scrutiny Committee.

3 Background

Members will recall that Fire Authority has previously agreed to the creation of the Performance & Scrutiny Committee to strengthen governance arrangements for the Authority. As part of this decision, it was also agreed that the Authority would seek two independent members to sit on the Committee to allow for independent views of the community to assist the scrutiny process. A recruitment exercise has now taken place and Fire Authority has a number of recommendations for consideration for appointment.

4 Appointment of Independent Members

As part of the recruitment process, eight potential candidates met individually with the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer. All candidates spoken to showed a keen interest to assist the Fire Authority in its oversight role.

Following those discussions, the Monitoring Officer has three exceptional recommended candidates for appointment to sit on the Performance & Scrutiny Committee.

Each of the candidates have complimentary skills and experience which will aid the work of the Committee in providing scrutiny and operating as a real critical friend to Officers and to the Authority.

The three recommended candidates are (in alphabetical order):

Robin Bennett – has experience in public service governance and scrutiny, including six years as an Independent Member of West Mercia Police Authority where he undertook performance, risk, and standards oversight. Additional experience includes chairing local policing boards, voluntary service as a Community First Responder and as a Managing Director of a software firm.

Yasser Khan - has experience in community development and programme delivery, including work on place-based interventions, multi-agency collaboration, and data governance. Yasser has recently been appointed as an Ethics Panel Member for the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, has held trustee positions, and school governor responsibilities.

Justine Vaughan - has significant experience in organisational leadership and HR management, including senior roles such as Chief People Officer and HR Director roles, covering both the UK and internationally. In her current role, she works directly with both Health and West Midlands Ambulance partners. Her experience covers organisational development, workforce planning, process governance, and risk and compliance oversight.

Fire Authority is therefore asked to ratify their appointment as Independent Members of the Performance & Scrutiny Committee.

Members will also note that Fire Authority had initially envisaged, and approved, terms of reference for up to two independent members to sit on the Committee. The Monitoring Officer believes that the three candidates identified will bring significant benefits to the Committee and its work.

The revised Terms of Reference at the **Appendix** incorporate a change to enable the Committee to have up to three Independent Members rather than two and clarifies the non-voting nature of the independent members.

5 Conclusions

Fire Authority is recommended to approve and adopt the revised Terms of Reference for Performance & Scrutiny to allow up to three independent members to serve on the Committee, and to ratify the appointment of the three candidates as Independent Members of the Performance & Scrutiny Committee.

6 Financial Implications

Each independent member role attracts an allowance of £500 per year. These costs will be met from existing budgets.

7 Legal Comment

Whilst there are no direct legal implications arising from this report, ensuring good governance, oversight and scrutiny of the work of both the Service and Fire Authority will mean that Fire Authority are ensuring they are meeting the requirements of the Fire Authority to demonstrate good governance.

8 HMICFRS Areas For Improvement, Cause of Concern, External Audit Recommendations

This report relates to CoC R5 – Robust processes are in place to ensure accurate, timely and detailed financial reporting to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report. An e-EQIA is not, therefore, required.

10 Appendix

Draft revised Terms of Reference for Performance & Scrutiny Committee

11 Background Papers

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
23 July 2025, Paper 3 – Governance Arrangements for the Fire Authority

Performance & Scrutiny Committee

Terms of Reference

Members: **8** **7** consisting of 5 Fire Authority Members and **up to 3** **2** Independent Scrutiny Members

Quorum: **3**

Membership

Members of this Committee shall be drawn from the membership of the Fire Authority, in addition to **up to 3** **2** independent scrutiny members.

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority shall not be members of the Performance and Scrutiny Committee but have a standing invitation to attend all such meetings and speak.

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Strategy and Resources and the Audit and Standards Committee shall not be members of the Performance and Scrutiny Committee.

Members of the Fire Authority's Strategy and Resources Committee and its Audit and Standards Committee are not entitled to sit on this Performance and Scrutiny Committee.

Independent Scrutiny Members will not have voting rights.

Chair:

The Chair of the Committee shall be elected by the Committee at its first meeting of each municipal year.

Purpose:

In line with expectations set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018, Sections 3.12 and 3.13, the Fire Authority has established a Scrutiny Committee to support in achieving its strategic objectives and ensuring that its policy and budgetary framework is followed and developed to reflect the changing needs and demands in meeting its statutory obligations.

The Performance and Scrutiny Committee shall also be responsible for oversight of performance.

The overall purpose of the Committee will be to provide oversight and assurance that the Chief Fire Officer and/or the Service Management Team; and committees of the Fire Authority are making appropriate and effective decisions that are aligned with the Fire Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and any other areas of Fire Authority Strategy.

Scrutiny

In terms of scrutiny, the Committee shall:

- Inform Policy Development – provide, where appropriate, a political steer before a decision is taken/implemented.
- Hold Officers and the Service to Account – the Committee may call in decisions for scrutiny before they are implemented and may call upon officers to respond to enquiries.
- Hold the Authority to account – the Committee may call-in decisions for scrutiny before they are implemented, may examine decisions that have already been implemented and may call upon relevant members to respond to enquiries.
- Conduct reviews into specific issues – the Committee may identify matters that it wishes to conduct reviews into and call the relevant officers and members to assist it in carrying out those reviews.

In carrying out its role the Scrutiny Committee may look at strategic issues.

Performance Management

To oversee the process of assessing progress toward achieving the Fire Authority's predetermined goals, as set out in the Annual Plan. The Committee's role involves building on that process, adding the relevant communication and action on the progress achieved against the predetermined goals.

Performance Monitoring

Consider, monitor, review and, as appropriate, approve the following documents

- Monitoring reports on implementation of Annual Plan goals
- Quarterly performance monitoring reports on Corporate Performance Indicators
- Exception reports on Directorate objectives, where they lead to a failure in Corporate Performance Indicators
- Annual Review on the Service's previous year's performance prior to submission to the Fire Authority
- Monitoring reports on complaints and compliments and consider any customer relations issues arising from such reports, making recommendations to the Authority and Officers as appropriate

Meetings:

The scheduling of Committee meetings shall be contingent on the Fire Authority's published meeting schedule. Scrutiny Committee meetings will be held at least one calendar month in advance of scheduled Fire Authority meetings to allow select papers to be considered by Scrutiny prior to consideration by Fire Authority as a whole.

The Committee sessions will be public unless the topic being discussed is considered exempt.

Terms of Reference:

An annual work programme will be developed each year for the Committee. For scrutiny items, Members of the Fire Authority and the Independent Scrutiny Members will be regularly canvassed for ideas for areas to add to the work programme. The work programme shall be agreed by the Committee at its first meeting of each municipal year, although where a need arises, additional items may be agreed to be added to the work programme during the course of a municipal year.

The Committee may scrutinise:

- Service Delivery
- Corporate Services
- Service Communications
- Fire and Rescue Authority/Service Risk
- Performance

Areas for Scrutiny will identify

- Accountable person
- Rationale of Scrutiny
- Aim and objectives
- Terms of reference
- Timeline outlining milestones
- Regular updates

Scrutiny can take place pre or post decision, ensuring the Committee can be as effective as possible. A Scrutiny review into any particular matter, will not exceed a 12-month period.

Powers:

The Committee will not have decision making powers. Where Scrutiny takes place, should the Committee feel it appropriate, they may make recommendations to any other Committee or Fire Authority for their consideration.

Accountability/ Reporting:

An annual summary from the Scrutiny Committee will be provided to the Fire Authority for awareness and progress.