

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	AUTHORITY (ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING)		
DATE:	12 JUNE 2025	REPORT NO:	MO/02/2526
PRESENTING OFFICER	MONITORING OFFICER, RIA GROVES		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	MONITORING OFFICER, RIA GROVES	REPORT AUTHORS:	MONITORING OFFICER, RIA GROVES
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM		
TITLE OF REPORT:	STRUCTURE OF THE AUTHORITY		
APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A:	STRUCTURE OF AUTHORITY	
	APPENDIX B:	COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP	

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to
 - (a) inform Members of:
 - (i) the minimum legal structure of the Authority
 - (ii) the existing decision making structure of the Authority; and
 - (iii) optional variations to the existing structure
 - (b) request that the Authority determines an appropriate decision making structure for 2025/26; and
 - (c) request that arrangements are made for the appointment of Committees, the nomination of Chairs, the determination of the powers and duties of Committees, the appointment of Members to Committees; and Special Responsibility Roles.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Members determine an appropriate decision making structure for 2025/26 by:
 - a) determining which Committees it wishes to establish;
 - b) determining the number of voting Members to be appointed to each Committee;
 - c) determining the number of seats on each Committee to be allocated to each political group in accordance with the political balance regulations;

- d) determining that an alternate from the relevant political group already appointed to the Authority can attend a Committee in the absence of the substantive Member;
- e) confirming the Members who are to be appointed to each Committee and roles attracting a Special Responsibility Allowance, in accordance with the wishes of the relevant political group, in respect of those seats allocated to that group;
- f) confirming the Members who are to be appointed to Lead Member roles;
- g) confirming the Member who is to be appointed as an Employer Representative on the Local Pension Board; and
- h) confirming that Members will inform Democratic Services prior to the start of any meeting if an alternate Member is attending on their behalf.

Introduction and Background

1. This report confirms the political balance of the Authority as:

Labour	72.21%
Liberal Democrats	11.11%
Conservative	5.56%
Green	5.56%
Liverpool Community Independent Group	5.56%

2. Members are advised that this year the Opposition Party with the largest percentage is the Liberal Democrats.
3. Based upon the political balance of the Authority, Members are requested to consider and determine the appropriate decision making structure, appointment of Committees, nominate Chairs and Members to those Committees and appointment of roles that attract a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA).
4. Minimum Legal Requirement

6.1 The minimum statutory requirements for a decision making structure are:

- (a) Authority Meetings – There is a statutory requirement to hold an Annual General Meeting (before the end of June in each year) and to meet to determine the precept (by the end of February in each year). The Authority is also required to consider other miscellaneous matters including statutory reports of the Chief Finance Officer, Director of Finance and Procurement or Monitoring Officer and public interest reports, should they arise.
- (b) It is recognised as good practice to have an Audit Committee, or a Committee that deals with audit matters. In the Authority's case this also serves as the Standards Committee - which is a legal requirement.

5. Existing Structure

7.1 At present, as well as the Authority Committee, the Authority has appointed:

- (a) A Community Safety and Protection Committee, a Policy and Resources Committee and a Scrutiny Committee, each consisting of 9 voting Members; and an Audit Committee consisting of 6 voting Members (according to political proportionality);

The Audit Committee will deal with Members Standards issues; and is the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee for dealing with any complaints under the Disciplinary Procedure for Relevant Officers;

The Community Safety and Protection Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee have delegated decision-making powers in the circumstances where there is no opportunity for the Authority to meet in full.

- (b) An Appeals Committee and an Appointments Committee.
- (c) A Joint Fire and Police Collaboration Committee, which is a none decision-making Committee consisting of 5 Members – 4 Members (elected Councillors) plus the Police & Crime Commissioner for Merseyside. Since the appointment of the Police and Crime Commissioner to the Authority in 2021, this Committee only meets when required and does not have a standard meeting cycle.
- (d) Each Committee has certain delegated powers, which are contained within its Terms of Reference.
- (e) The Authority has a Member Development and Engagement Group with approved Terms of Reference.

6. Determination of a Structure for 2025/26

8.1 It is recommended that the Authority Committee structure continues to include a Policy and Resources Committee; a Community Safety and Protection Committee, a Scrutiny Committee, an Audit Committee, a Joint Fire and Police Committee plus an Appeals Committee and Appointments Committee; and a Member Development and Engagement Group.

8.2 The Audit Committee will continue to deal with Members Standards issues and act as the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee in relation to, and in accordance with, the Disciplinary Procedures for Relevant Officers.

- 8.3 The proposed terms of reference and powers of each Committee are contained within the Constitution for 2025/26, which is the subject of another report on this agenda.
- 8.4 In 2015, the Authority established a Local Pension Board (LPB), a non-decision-making body, to assist in ensuring the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Firefighters (Pension Scheme) as required by law.
- 8.5 The membership includes three employer representatives and three trade union member representatives. It was agreed one Member of the Authority would be appointed as one of the employer representatives on the LPB. Members are asked to nominate a Member to be an employer representative on the LPB. It is proposed that such a role would not attract a special responsibility allowance. The number of meetings held, and any other commitments expected from the nominated Member throughout the year will be considered in determining whether a special responsibility allowance may be proposed in the future.
- 8.6 In making their decision on a structure, Members are also requested to take into account the following matters:
- (a) the requirement for each political group to complete a notice in writing to the Monitoring Officer, detailing their Membership and a Group leader where appropriate;
 - (b) the requirement for political balance on any committees which are appointed; unless the Authority has resolved otherwise and no Member has voted against such resolution;
 - (c) the requirement to appoint Members to committees in accordance with the wishes of the political group to whom the seat has been allocated. In this respect it will assist the Monitoring Officer if all such nominations can be determined at, or before the Annual Meeting;
 - (d) the appointment of Chairs of Committees;
 - (e) the requirement for approval of the Powers and Duties of each appointed Committee;
 - (f) the appointment of Lead Members; and
 - (g) the appointment of a Member as the employer representative on the Local Pension Board.

7. Number of Seats & Political Balance/Membership of Committees

- 9.1 The Authority is required to make appointments to its Committees in a manner which, so far as practicable reflects the political balance of the Authority unless the Authority has resolved otherwise.

- 9.2 The representation of on the Authority in respect of political parties will be as follows:

Labour	13
Liberal Democrats	2
Conservative	1
Green	1
Liverpool Community Independent Group	1

- 9.3 In order to comply with political balance requirements, where practicable, it is therefore appropriate that the proportion of seats on committees allocated to political groups is in accordance with the proportionality below.

Labour	72.21%
Liberal Democrats	11.11%
Conservative	5.56%
Green	5.56%
Liverpool Community Independent Group	5.56%

- 9.4 Members are to agree to the appointments to each committee in accordance with the structure detailed in Appendix B with the only restriction on appointment being the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority, who should not attend meetings of the Scrutiny Committee;
- 9.5 Having decided which Committees the Authority is to establish; and the number of voting Members to be appointed to each Committee, it is then appropriate for each political group to submit nominations for membership of those committees in accordance with the allocation of seats to that political group.
- 9.6 Members are requested to consider their nominations in advance of the meeting, so that the information can be provided; and appointments confirmed at the Annual General Meeting.

8. Chairs of Committees

- 10.1 Having determined which Members are to be appointed to the Committees, it is appropriate for the Authority to consider proposals for the appointment of Chairs to each Committee.
- 10.2 Members are requested to consider this issue prior to the Annual General Meeting, with a view to the Authority being in a position to appoint Chairs of Committees at the Annual General Meeting.

9. Lead Members

- 11.1 The reintroduction of Lead Members was approved for the municipal year 2023/24. Members were appointed as Lead Members for Operational Response, Preparedness, Prevention, Protection and People with a focus of the CRMP and the People Plan. The feedback from the previous Lead Members has been positive with Members noting they have obtained a greater understanding of the workings of the functions and implications for the Authority. This leads to a greater level of scrutiny as part of their decision making.
- 11.2 Following the reintroduction of the Lead Members, a review was undertaken of the process by the Monitoring Officer. As noted in paragraph 11.1 Members have acknowledged the benefits of the role with equally positive feedback also received from the Officers. However, it is proposed that greater structure of the process throughout the year will lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness of the role in providing Members with a greater knowledge of their respective areas increasing the scrutiny and accountability of the Authority.
- 11.3 It is therefore recommended that there will be three meetings throughout the year facilitated by the Democratic services team to cover the following topics:
- (a) Review of the corporate services, fire service inspection and production of the corporate plans
 - (b) CRMP/People Plan actions of the respective functions
 - (c) Functional Plans
- 11.4 It is also proposed that an overview of the Lead Members learning and findings throughout the year be reported back to the Authority at the end of the municipal year. Lead Members at their review can consider any relevant recommendations as to topics for learning lunches or additional areas to recommend to the Authority to be scrutinised by the Scrutiny Committee.
- 11.5 Members are therefore asked to nominate Lead Members to be the responsible member for Operational Response, Preparedness, Prevention, Protection and People which aligns to the Authority's aims. This would not be an additional responsibility as it falls within the role of a Member of the Authority however allows Lead Members a more specific insight into these areas to report back to the Authority.

Equality and Diversity Implications

10. There are no equality or diversity implications directly arising from this report.

Staff Implications

11. There are no staff implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

12. The Authority is required by law to set a minimum structure and a Standards Committee, which this report addresses.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

13. Costs associated with allowances relating to responsibilities such as being a Chair of a Committee are detailed in another report on this agenda.

Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

14. There are no direct risk management or health and safety implications arising from this report.

Environmental Implications

15. There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

Contribution to Our Vision: *To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK.*

Our Purpose: *Here to serve, Here to protect, Here to keep you safe.*

16. Confirming a robust Authority structure ensures that we are able to best serve communities and share knowledge of what we do.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NONE