

Corporate Governance Improvement Board Summary Notes and Actions

Friday 26 September 2025

Ref	Action	Summary
		<p>In Attendance: Zoe Billingham, Cllr Chris Read, Chris West, Lisa Kirkman, Craig Parkin, Cllr Bayton, Cllr Hogarth, Simon Tuhill, Simon Barry, Tom Embury, Sarah Sprung.</p> <p>Observers: Fennella Morris, Rafal Pisula, Angela Chadha,</p> <p>Online: Helen Edwards, Satinder Sahota, Cllr Miks (Until 11am), Cllr Bailey, Cllr Lloyd (Joined at 10:46am).</p>
		<p>Agenda item 1: Apologies</p> <p>Executive Summary: There were apologies for absence from Mark Norris and Iain Newman. Introductions were provided to the Best Value Inspection Team.</p>
		<p>Agenda item 2: Arising Actions - September 2025</p> <p>Executive Summary: Tom Embury, Interim Clerk provided an overview of the arising actions report. The Board were advised of the following updates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional DSO due to start on Monday 6th October. A Corporate Risk Specialist would also join the Governance Team in November 2025. 2. Document storage request – security issues were still ongoing. A solution may be possible with a proposed system used by Grant Thornton (External Auditors) 3. Cost analysis action 4 - incorrect date to be updated to October 2025. 4. Action 3 – Risk Reporting – Corporate Risk report to be taken to the next Audit and Risk Committee in November. Date updated to reflect this. 5. Action 5 – meetings online/in-person ongoing. 6. Action 4 – 3PT – ongoing. 7. Action 5 targeted FRAs, action 6 Member Development Strategy and action 8 FRA involvement in constitutional review to be discussed later in the agenda.

<p>8. Action 8 constitutional changes to MEF – the last MEF overran so two items, as per the work plan will be taken to the next MEF in October.</p> <p>9. Action 9 – complete with acknowledgment that ongoing meetings with BVI and the Ind. Chair would be helpful.</p>		
1	That an update be given on the document storage solution.	Following a proposed solution of using a system used by the External Auditors, the Chair requested a specific update on this at the next meeting.
2	That action 5 – meetings in person/online be marked as completed. Invites to be updated to remove Teams links for in-person meetings.	To ensure clarity on required attendance via teams or in-person.
3	That the full improvement plan be brought to the next meeting to provide members updates on progress on all items.	To ensure progress is being made in all areas of the Improvement Plan.
<p>Agenda item 3: CGIB Summary Notes</p> <p>Executive Summary: The Chair presented the CGIB summary notes.</p>		
4	That the summary notes were a true and accurate record.	All members agreed.

Agenda item 4: Governance Models – Executive Committees

Executive Summary: Tom Embury provided an overview of the Governance Models – Executive Committees report that outlined the questionnaire used to engage with the previously approved organisations. The Board were advised that one of the five organisations had met with him and Helen Edwards and provided comprehensive, honest responses to the questions answered. Key themes, strengths and weaknesses raised by the organisation was highlighted, with acknowledgment that the organisation overall had been very positive on their experience. Members queried the difference in the number of members impacting the experience of other organisations, the risk of repetition, impact of multi-party scenarios and similarities with the current Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee. Members expressed the need for further feedback to make a definitive decision. Thanks were given to the organisation for their engagement. A further two of the five had promised a response in due course.

5	That an option appraisal paper on executive committees be brought to the next CGIB meeting.	<p>The options paper would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths, weaknesses and risks • Benefits and any potential impacts anticipated (to include any cross over with the current committee set up) • All options available • Anonymised feedback from organisations responding to the questionnaire circulated by the Interim Clerk and Independent Member for Governance • Multi-party scenarios
6	That Simon Tuhill CFO and Craig Parkin CFO would highlight the questionnaire to their counterparts in the previously agreed organisations.	Both CFOs offered their assistance in sharing the questionnaire with their counterparts in the 4 remaining organisations.

Agenda item 5: Definition of Core Strategic Tasks

Executive Summary: Tom Embury provided an overview of the Definition of core strategic tasks report that outlined the revised strategic tasks ahead of their formal approval at Fire Authority in November. Members of the Authority had been engaged at the Members Engagement Forum early September. The strategic tasks had been linked with the FRA National Framework. It was acknowledged that some areas had been very comprehensive and others lacked detail. All changes would be incorporated as part of the wider constitutional changes being conducted by VWV.

7	That the proposed changes be incorporated and circulated to the Board via email for further comment ahead of formal sign off by the Authority in November.	<p>That the following changes be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table to be clear on breakdown and distinguish what is deemed as FRA and Committees responsibilities • Term ‘Secure assurance’ was believed to be too passive. Review wording to strengthen its requirement. • Clearer set of roles i.e. setting the strategy and who oversees and who actions to ensure clarity. • Pg 22 on recruitment of officers to be amended to reflect what is outlined within the constitution as elements are delegated. • Property and assets to be included. • Transparency code to be reflected in scheme of delegation. • Wording on holding officers to account to be clearer on which officers. Reference to the process for the Monitoring Officer, Clerk, Treasurer to be included.
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Agenda item 6: Member Role Description

Executive Summary: Tom Embury provided an overview of the Member Role Description that outlined the proposed changes. Member of the Authority had been engaged at Members Engagement Forum in early September, and their feedback had been incorporated including clearer expectations on workloads to assist Local Authorities with their appointments process. The revisions aligned with LGA guidance, best practice and the National framework. Concerns were raised that it was unclear to members when being appointed by their leaders on the workload required for the role and further work needed to be done to rectify this. Emphasis was given on the need for clear skills required for the role, mechanisms to identify any gaps that could be filled during the appointment process with acknowledgement given on the need to pre-engage with leaders and councillors prior to appointments being made.

8	That the proposed changes be incorporated and circulated to the Board via email for further comment ahead of formal sign off by the Authority in November.	<p>That the following changes be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Chairs role to be clear on requirements to engagement with Local authority leaders throughout the year for Chair. ● Specific skills to be included. Sarah Sprung, LGA, to assist with wording. ● Pg. 36 – ceremonies to be included. ● More engagement/profile at SRA level to be given emphasis ● Feed into LGA on learning ● Co-optees/non voting members to be added. ● 2.1c behaviour to be included. ● Breakdown section on Chairs of different committees.
9	<p>That a video be developed on what the Authority is and its roles and responsibilities to circulate to Local Authorities to share with their members.</p> <p>-</p>	<p>The video to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FRA roles and responsibilities ● Different members roles, ● Intro from the CFO, ● Incorporate statutory officers ● Statements from current members on their experiences

10	That the LGA assist with incorporating information on the FRA, including the information video, into the Local Authorities induction packs for members joining their councils following the May 2026 elections.	
11	To engage with DSO counterparts to provide the opportunity to submit a summary page of what is expected from members to the Local Authority Leaders meeting.	The Chair of the Authority to present accordingly.
12	That work be fed back into the LGA to develop any learning that could be established.	

Agenda item 7: Full Review of Member Development Strategy

Executive Summary: Sarah Sprung provided an overview of proposed changes to the current member development strategy, to better align with best practice. The strategy had been member and responsive led, with lessons being learnt from other local authorities. Praise was given on the focus of strengths rather than skills as it seemed more appropriate/helpful to distinguish. The Board were advised that 6 monthly appraisals with members already took place with the Leaders of each political group but it was felt the template needed further work. Discussions were held on the potential incorporating the role of 'whip' into the strategy however, it was felt this was a political matter for their respective groups and would not be appropriate for officer involvement and emphasis was on the Leader of the political groups in an authority setting. Following queries on the pace of implementation, it was acknowledged that the publication of an overarching report in the summer was an aspiration at this point in time.

13	That the proposed changes be incorporated and circulated via email to Cllr Bailey, Cllr Chris Reed, Chair of the Authority and CFO Craig Parkin to ensure all amendments incorporated for ahead of its submission to the Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee in November.	That the following changes be incorporated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specific statement on behaviour/culture to be included. ● More visibility to be given on code of conduct, ● Clear reference on performance and leadership behaviours to be added. ● References and examples within the WM to be added to bring it to life. ● Specific induction section for the Chair of the Authority. ● Reflection time to be incorporated to ensure any issues can be addressed.
14	That an update be given at Novembers CGIB meeting on the Member Development Strategy following ASAC and FRA meetings.	

15	That Sarah Sprung, LGA assist with reviewing/updating the appraisal document used for members of the authority.	DSO to circulate the previous version used.
<p>Agenda item 8: Report Format and Input Process by Statutory Officers</p> <p>Executive Summary: Tom Embury provided an overview of the report format and input process by statutory officers that outlined the current template and the internal process to sign off reports. The Board were advised that the template had been updated in Spring of that year and aligned with the Internal Senior Leadership teams report template to provide consistency across the service. Providing consistency also assisted with officer development through report writing at different levels of the service. It was acknowledged that the actual content being input into the reports was a crucial element.</p>		
16	That the proposed changes be incorporated into the template.	<p>That the following changes be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add risk implications • 3.6 – to be updated to reflect that the Monitoring Officer would sign off the whole report, not just legal implications.
17	That Chris West assist with wording on the financial implications.	To ensure that it is clear what budget the recommendations would be funded from, or should there be no allocated budget, how they would be funded.

Agenda Item 9: Constitutional Changes

Executive Summary: Lisa Kirkman, Deputy Monitoring Officer – VWV, provided members of the Board with a presentation that outlined the progress made against the Improvement Plan actions (and incorporating ESI and Grant Thorntons statutory recommendations) and next steps to be taken as part of the wider constitution review. 5 actions had been completed thus far, with timeliness addressing how further actions would be completed being presented. Meetings had taken place with relevant officers, including the S151, Clerk, DSO with feedback being received on the current version of the constitution. Engagement with Fire Authority members on relevant Sections of the constitution had already begun, with further sessions planned at future Member Engagement Forums to ensure all sections have had thorough engagement. Officer input would be sought at the training session planned in October. It was anticipated that the final fully revised constitution would be presented to the Fire Authority in February 2026 and would be in a position to implement at the point of decision. The extended timeframe would ensure that all relevant training and relevant, meaningful engagement could be incorporated within the timelines provided. Emphasis was given by members that this was a comprehensive review and once final would have the full backing of those on the Board should different views arise from membership changes anticipated after the May 2026 elections. The board highlighted the revision must strengthen key elements including the scheme of delegations and the golden triangle and ensure it is accessible/modern for all users.

18	That an update on the constitution be brought to every board meeting.	Members felt the presentation slides were a useful tool to track progress and next steps clearly.
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Agenda Item 10: Officer Governance Training

Executive Summary: Tom Embury confirmed that training was scheduled for the Senior Leadership Team with VWV for the 14th October 2025 and an update would be given at Octobers meeting.

No actions.

Agenda item 8: CGIB Forward Work Plan

Executive Summary: Tom Embury advised members that the work plan would be updated to reflect today's actions and revised timelines.

No further actions.

Agenda item 13: Meeting Reflections

Executive Summary: Thanks was given to the Clerk for his work on the Board and ensure was given that the team had sufficient resources to follow up on actions arising from the meeting. Board members felt there was a clear steer for direction to take forward relevant actions.

No actions.

Agenda item 14: Any other business

Executive Summary: The Chair thanked Sarah Sprung, Clerk and DSO for their work on today's papers and felt the direction forward was positive. She felt that the Board was able to openly challenge and voice opinions effectively. Thanks were given to the Best Value Inspection Team for their time and any feedback from them would be appreciated.