

## HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY

30 SEPTEMBER 2019

### **PRESENT:**

#### **Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:**

Councillors Bryan, Chadwick, Davison, Fox, Jefferson JP, Smith and West

#### **Representing Hull City Council:**

Councillors Chambers, Dad, McMurray, Nicola, Randall and Singh

#### **Representing North East Lincolnshire Council:**

Councillors Barfield and Shepherd

#### **Representing North Lincolnshire Council:**

Councillors Briggs (*Chairperson*), Grant, Mumby-Croft and Sherwood

#### **Officers of Humberside Fire & Rescue Service**

Chris Blacksell - Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, Kevin Wilson - Executive Director of Corporate Services/Section 151 Officer, Paul McCourt - Director of Service Delivery, Niall McKiniry - Director of Service Improvement, Miriam Heppell - Director of People and Development, Alan Maltby - Head of IT, Mathew Buckley - Monitoring Officer/Secretary and Gareth Naidoo - Committee Manager.

#### **Independent Co-opted Members of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee**

Doug Chapman (presented Minute 65/19) and Andrew Smith were in attendance as observers.

#### **External Auditor**

Gavin Barker - Director - Public Services (Mazars) (presented Minute 66/19)

The meeting was held at the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am.

**TRIBUTE TO FORMER MEMBER** - The Authority paid tribute to Mrs Gill Hardy (a former Member of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee) who had passed away recently.

**TRIBUTE TO FIRE FIGHTER** - The Authority paid tribute to Firefighter Josh Gardener from Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service who tragically died recently in a training exercise.

**59/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** - Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Green, James, Swinburn and Keith Hunter - Police and Crime commissioner.

**60/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** - There were no declarations.

**61/19 MINUTES - Resolved** - That the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 29 July 2019 be received as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

**62/19 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS** - There were no questions.

**63/19 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS** - No petitions or requests for a deputation had been received.

**64/19 COMMUNICATIONS** - The following communications were received:

- (i) **LGA Leadership Essentials: Fire and Rescue 12-13 February 2020** - Members were invited to attend this two day programme in Warwick which would provide Members with a comprehensive overview of key aspects of the fire sector and issues currently affecting fire and rescue authorities.
- (ii) **Pension grants** - The Service would be writing to the Minister to seek assurance that 100 percent of the increase in employer contributions resulting from a recent change in public sector pension discount rates would be met by the grant from Government in 2020/21 as part of the December 2019 Local Government Finance Settlement.
- (iii) **Emergency Plan Teams** - Councillor Fox and her fellow ward councillor had recently attended an opening day at Goole Fire Station. Members' attention was drawn to the fact that Emergency Plan teams were willing to meet with parish councils to discuss emergency plan contingencies.

**65/19 MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** - Doug Chapman, Chairperson of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee, presented the draft minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 September 2019, drawing Members' attention to the following:

- (i) Internal Audit Progress Update (Minute 34/19 refers);
- (ii) External Audit Progress (Minute 35/19 refers) - since the consideration of this item Members of the GAS Committee had received the 'Additional Fee Letter 2018/19' requesting an additional fee variation of £950 plus VAT to meet the final audit fees for the year. GAS Members supported this request;
- (iii) Effectiveness of the Cost Recovery Model for Emergency Medical Response (Minute 44/19 refers);

**Resolved** - That the draft minutes of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 September 2019 be received.

**66/19 EXTERNAL AUDIT - ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER** - Gavin Barker - Director (Mazars) presented a report finalising the contents of the draft Audit Completion Report which was received by the Authority at its meeting of 29 July 2019 (Minute 49/19 refers).

The Audit report issued on 29 July 2019 included the External Audit opinion that the financial statements:

- gave a true and fair view of the Authority's financial position as at 31 March 2019 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- had been prepared properly in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)/Local Authority (Scotland) Accounts Advisory Committee (LASAAC) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19.

The report also included the External Audit opinion that:

- The other information in the Statement of Accounts was consistent with the audited financial statements.

The report concluded that External Audit was satisfied that in all significant respects, the Authority had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2019.

In line with group audit instructions issued by the national Audit Office (NAO), on 29 July 2019 it was reported that the Authority's activity was below the threshold set by the NAO, meaning the auditors were not required to review the Whole of Government Accounts return.

The report confirmed that External Audit did not use its powers under s24 of the 2014 Act to issue a report in the public interest or to make written recommendations to the Authority.

Also submitted with the report was an 'Additional Fee Letter 2018/19' which set the finalised costs of the audit fees for the year. The letter sought an additional fee variation of £950 plus VAT, making a total audit fee for the 2018/19 audit of £25,511 plus VAT.

The report had previously been considered by the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee (Minute 35/19 refers).

**Resolved** - That the Annual Audit Letter 2018/19 be received and additional fee variation approved.

**67/19 FINANCIAL OUTLOOK 2020/21 ONWARDS** - The Executive Director of Corporate Services/S.151 Officer submitted a report that considered the Authority's financial prospects for the years 2019/20 to 2023/24 an update on the rationale for a Prudent Minimum level of General Reserves (PMGR).

The Authority's outturn for 2018/19 delivered an underspend of £162,000 and a closing level of total Revenue Reserves of £10.19m. The Authority has set a balanced budget for 2019/20, however, the last budget monitoring to 30 June 2019 set out a £385,000 projected overspend.

As discussed at the July meeting of the Authority, the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) planned to introduce measures to bring the 2019/20 budget back into balance. An SLT away day was held on 3 September 2019 and measures were identified to deal with the 2019/20 projected overspend.

Austerity remained a feature for the short-to-medium term and the Brexit process underway at the moment continued to create a further degree of uncertainty over future public spending levels.

The current financial projections for 2020/21 to 2023/24 had been updated based on the latest assumptions and information, depicted in Appendix A of the report. The key assumptions applied were as follows:

<b>Assumptions applied to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2020/21 to 2023/24</b>				
	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
Pay Awards	2%	2%	2%	2%
External Grant	1.8%	0%	0%	0%
Precept Increase	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%
• Rates	3%	3%	3%	3%
• Utilities/Fuel	5%	5%	5%	5%
• Insurance	5%	5%	5%	5%

Furthermore, the Authority's financial projections had been updated to incorporate all previous decisions relating to efficiencies. As evidenced at Appendix A of the report over the medium-term the MTFP was balanced.

Reserves were held by the Authority to meet general financial risks and costs that might materialise (General Reserve) and also to meet specific project costs or financial liabilities (Earmarked Reserves). Appendix B of the report set out the projection of the Authority's General and Earmarked Reserves over the period 2020/21 to 2023/24. Appendix C of the report set out the analysis that had been undertaken to underpin the need to now maintain a Prudent Minimum General Reserve (PMGR) of circa £5.6m. More generally, financial risks at a macroeconomic level were likely to be volatile over the medium-term as the impact of the UK's exit from the European Union (Brexit) was felt and due to ongoing austerity as a result of the UK's public finances.

A PMGR of £5.6m was an increase on the previous assessment which was £5.2m. In order to bring the General Reserve to the required level it was recommended that the Change Management earmarked reserve of £400,000 was now removed and added to the General Reserve.

**Resolved** - (a) That the Prudent Minimum level of General Reserves (PMGR) of £5.6m be approved, and

(b) that the Service provides feedback to Members on its overtime payment policy following the meeting with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

**68/19 HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY AND POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FINANCE COLLABORATION** - The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive submitted a report that updated on the current position on sharing senior Finance roles between the Humberside Fire Authority (HFA) and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Humberside (PCC) and outlined the timescales for consideration and implementation should such an arrangement be approved.

Both HFA and the PCC for Humberside had a requirement to have a statutory Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer); for HFA this was the Executive Director of Corporate Services/S151 Officer and for the PCC it was the Chief Finance Officer.

There were a number of drivers that made the opportunity to share Section 151 Officers attractive:

- The Policing and Crime Act 2017 imposed a statutory duty on blue-light services to examine options for collaboration;
- The collaboration of Finance aligned with a number of existing support service collaborations between Fire and Rescue/Police that were already in place, for example, Estates Management, Vehicle and Equipment Workshops through ESFM (Humberside) Limited and Health, Safety and Environmental Management;
- The PCC's Office had indicated that their current Section 151 Officer was retiring in the next few months;
- There was a greater resilience for both HFA and the PCC if Finance roles and functions were aligned;
- There would be financial efficiencies for both HFA and the PCC if the sharing arrangement was progressed.

Any decision to progress the arrangement would require approval by the Authority, the PCC and consideration by the Police and Crime Panel. The report therefore set out the headline timetable for the coming months in the run-up to an implementation date. It was proposed that the Authority received a more detailed report seeking approval to commence collaboration at its next meeting of 25 October 2019.

**Resolved** - That the timetable for progressing the proposals for the Authority and Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) finance collaboration be received.

**69/19 SERVICE PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT - END OF 1<sup>ST</sup> QUARTER 2019/20 (APRIL - JUNE 2019)** - The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report that provided information relating to the Service's Performance and Risk Framework.

A summary of the Service's Performance and Risk Framework was presented, as replicated below:

<b>Prevention Performance</b>	
Accidental Dwelling Fires	19.7% below 3 year average.
Other Accidental Fires (exc. Vehicles)	11.4% below 3 year average.

<b>Prevention Performance</b>		
Deliberate Primary Fires	11.6% above 3 year average.	
Deliberate Secondary Fires	14.1% above 3 year average.	
Automatic Fire Alarms	10% below 3 year average.	
Fatalities	0 fatalities (aspirational target 0)	
Injuries	8 injuries (aspirational target 0)	
<b>Response Performance</b>		
First engine response	8.61% better than target	
Second engine response	8.19% better than target	
<b>Strategic Risks</b>		<b>Level</b>
Reduction in external financial support	Further efficiencies being considered with a view to decisions being made in early 2020.	Critical
East Coast and Hertfordshire Control Room Project (ECHCR).	Humberside is currently reviewing plans for system sustainability prior to cutover.	Critical
Impact of Brexit	Work is ongoing with the LRF in monitoring the outcome of the EU Exit.	Critical
<b>Complaints</b>		
<b>Quarter 1 Detail</b>		
Driving related	2 Upheld	0 Not Upheld
Conduct of employees	2 Upheld	1 Not Upheld
Performance of employees	0 Upheld	0 Not Upheld
Damage to property whilst responding to incidents	0 Upheld	0 Not Upheld
Other	0 Upheld	3 Not Upheld
<b>Current and Previous Quarter for comparison</b>		
	Current Quarter	Previous Quarter
Totals	4 Upheld	4 Not Upheld
		0 Upheld
		2 Not Upheld
<b>Compliments and Messages of Thanks</b>		
23 compliments and messages of thanks were received and posted on the Website		

Members took assurance from the Service's proactive approach to performance and risk management.

Regarding the East Coast and Hertfordshire Control Room (ECHCR) Project, the collaborative Command and Control IT system with three other fire and rescue services was due to go live on 26 November 2019. Members would be provided with a more detailed update on the ECHCR Project at the next Member Day on 4 October 2019.

The report had previously been considered by the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee (Minute 37/19 refers).

**Resolved** - That the report be received.

**70/19 HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT QUARTERLY REPORT - 1<sup>ST</sup> QUARTER 2019/20 (APRIL - JUNE 2019)** - The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report that presented the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2019/20 report on Health, Safety and Environment.

During the reporting period of April to June 2019 there were 22 incidents recorded that resulted in some form of personal injury compared to 23 for the same period last year. This was a marginal decrease of just over 4 percent. Reassuringly, it was also significantly below the five-year

rolling average of 28 for Quarter 1. Even more pleasingly was the lowest number of reported injuries or ill-health for Quarter 1 in the last five years.

Due to the make-up of the workforce, most of the injuries or ill-health episodes, 55 percent, were incurred by full-time firefighters. This was representative of employees and the more hazardous nature of the activities carried out by operational staff.

As could be seen from the five-year rolling average, the long-term accident trend continued to fall. Training activities made up the highest number of the total injuries reported which was the same as for Quarter 1 for the previous year. The positive difference was that for Quarter 1 last year, training activity accidents made up 57 percent of the total (13 out of 23); this year, that had dropped to 36 percent; (8 out of 22). Injuries arising from Fire had also reduced with those from Routine Activities and Road Traffic Collision (RTC) remaining constant.

The two activity areas showing an increase in reported injuries were Physical Training and, more notably, Special Service which had risen from zero to five in comparison to last year's Quarter 1.

Near miss reporting had decreased by 23 percent but at 33 for the Quarter 1 it was still significantly higher than the number of reported accidents (22), which in itself was a positive indicator of a proactive and responsible safety culture.

Members took assurance from the Service's proactive management of Health, Safety and Environmental outcomes.

Discussion then focussed on occupational cancer risks and the decontamination of dirty fire kit and the need for an awareness campaign amongst fire station staff. Also discussed was the dedicated training programme for both on-call fire fighters and retained fire fighters and the training provision provided by the Service.

The report had previously been considered by the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee (Minute 38/19 refers).

**Resolved** - (a) That the report be received, and

(b) that a future Member Day consider the topic on occupational cancer risks and the decontamination of dirty fire kit.

#### **71/19 OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE QUARTERLY REPORT - 1<sup>ST</sup> QUARTER 2019/20 (APRIL - JUNE 2019)** - The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report that presented the Quarter 1 2019/20 report on Operational Assurance.

The quality of information gathered from all types of debriefs had improved significantly through increased education and awareness of assessors. This had enabled a much greater understanding of the importance of capturing learning in order to continually improve firefighter safety.

Each assessment undertaken was broken down into three key areas: Safety Critical, Areas of Concern and Exceptional Practice. Safety Critical reporting reduced by 33 percent (9 to 6) and Area of Concern reporting reduced by 35 percent (86 to 58). The reduction in Safety Critical and Areas of Concern were positive indicators showing that improvements in operational performance had been made. Not all Areas of Concern and Safety Critical Concerns, however, were reported and so the importance of reporting in these areas must be reinforced to continually improve firefighter safety. Exceptional Practice reporting saw the most dramatic change with a 111 percent increase in reporting (176 to 372). This increase was another positive indicator that best practice was being captured and communicated and that the level of reporting was higher throughout the service.

The utilisation of appliance Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) to assure operational incidents had highlighted an Area of Concern, however, the majority of incidents had been managed in accordance with the principles of National Operational Guidance and Service standard operating

procedures. Unfortunately, during the second and third month CCTV cartridges were unable to be obtained. This was as a result of a request from the Police to assist in an investigation which resulted in them requesting some of the Service's cartridges. New cartridges had now been ordered and as a result of this occurrence a new process of obtaining them had been put in place to ensure future resilience in this area.

Over this reporting period, one thematic review had taken place. The correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) worn by appliance drivers review came to an end on 31 July. Operational assurance had been monitoring whether PPE was being donned within an appropriate timescale and was appropriate for the task being carried out at incidents and exercises. Throughout May and June, 27 thematic review completions had been received. So far, the figures showed that the vast majority of drivers were donning PPE in an appropriate timescale and that it was appropriate for the task they were given with only two reports stating otherwise (7 percent). Currently the Service was in the process of collating and publishing the results. Recommendations would be made on this area once this was completed.

Both the thematic reviews for correct use of the airbag restraint and for messages had been completed and the findings collated. As a result of the conclusions of the messages review a number of recommendations were put forward including a review of the radio procedures policy, creation of a learnpro package on radio messages and finally, that Service Control and Flexible Duty System (FDS) officers continued to monitor the quality and standard of messages in order to strive for best practice. The review of the correct use of airbag restraints garnered very positive results. With the exception of one, all incidents showed that the restraint was fitted correctly and within the appropriate timescale.

Having reviewed CCTV footage of various incidents an area of concern had arisen on two separate occasions in very similar scenarios. It would appear that when crews were working in roadways but were not at a Road Traffic Collision (RTC) incident they were failing to wear the correct PPE (hi-vis). This was an area that the Service planned to consider further as part of a thematic review.

Members took assurance that systems and procedures were in place to identify, capture, rectify and share lessons learnt in the operational arena.

The report had previously been considered by the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee (Minute 39/19 refers).

**Resolved** - That the report be received.

## 72/19 ABSENCE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

- The Director of People and Development submitted a report with regard to absence management for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 June 2019.

Performance during this period by staff group showed one staff group being significantly below target, two slightly above target and one area of focus above target due to long term absence in that area.

	Sum of Days Lost	Establishment	Average Duty Days Lost per person	2019/20 annual target per person	YTD (annual divided by 12 x current month number)
Control	160	27.5	5.82	8.70	2.18
Fire Staff	541.24	175.29	3.09	10.00	2.5
On Call	256.11	346	0.74	7.00	1.75
Full Time	882.00	479	1.80	7.00	1.75
<b>total</b>	<b>1819.35</b>	<b>1027.79</b>	<b>1.77</b>		

The level of absence in Control was a concern, however, this was due to a small amount of staff having long term absence issues. As there were only 27.5 staff on the Control establishment, long term absence could quickly skew the figures disproportionately.

It was important, however, to note that during this quarter, 96.7 percent of Full Time Firefighters and 95.27 percent of Fire Staff achieved full attendance.

The Service continued to support staff experiencing mental health conditions with initiatives such as the Blue Light Champions, Critical Incident Support and publicising potential internal and external routes where staff might seek support. It was also anticipated that the recent training and promotion of the zero tolerance to bullying campaign might also help to identify and address situations which were leading to mental health issues in the Service.

Comparison of long-term and short-term absence against medical condition was reported that highlighted the rise in mental ill health and accounted for the highest levels of long term absence. Work continued to address this issue.

Current long term absences of a life threatening nature relating to cancer and cardiovascular issues were highlighted. Added to this were a number of staff suffering from back, knee and lower limb musculoskeletal conditions which were often inherent in an aging workforce undertaking work of a physically demanding nature. All of those issues were being managed and supported as appropriate to each individual case.

The Case Review Board continued to show real progress in encouraging consistent management of absence and empowering managers to both seek support and manage their own local absence issues more appropriately and effectively.

In comparing absence in the same period last year with this year, whilst there were concerns about the increase in long term absence, this was being addressed. Long term absence tended to be cyclical and was often complex to manage. At the point in the year with which this data was compared, a number of previous long term absentees had recently exited the Service on ill health grounds, thus improving the overall absence figures at that time. As referred to in the report, the Service was now supporting a number of staff further through long term health issues; 70 percent of the absence issues in the last quarter had been long term in nature.

High levels of activity and focus continued to be placed on the management of absence. Recent developments with the zero tolerance to bullying campaign and mental health support mechanisms aimed to address the mental health issues within the organisation. Similarly the biannual fitness testing process aimed to identify and support all operational staff with general fitness and muscular skeletal issues.

Members took assurance that absence was being managed fairly, consistently and appropriately in the Service and necessary follow up actions were taken to address short and long term absence issues. Members also welcomed the appointment of a new Head of Occupational Health and Wellbeing and the future provision of a psychotherapy service for employees.

The report had previously been considered by the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee (Minute 40/19 refers).

**Resolved** - That the report be received.

**73/19 HMICFRS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP)** - The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report that presented the Service Improvement Plan for approval.

At the meeting of the Authority on 29 July 2019 Members received a report that set out the Service Improvement Plan (SIP) in response to the inspection report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). Members subsequently endorsed a six-week period of internal consultation. The final version of the SIP, incorporating relevant updates following consultation, was now submitted, as set out at Appendix A, for approval by Members.

The SIP incorporated all seventeen improvement recommendations identified by HMICFRS, plus additional learning/improvement areas identified by Officers. Each improvement action had been allocated to a named Director, with clear deadlines. The SIP would remain as a living document that contributed to future prioritisation and planning activities.

Following approval by Members the SIP would be a public document available on the Authority's website. It was proposed that progress updates be provided as a standing agenda item at future Authority and Governance, Audit & Scrutiny Committee meetings.

Whilst only a limited number (six) of responses were received following six-weeks internal consultation (ending on 12 September 2019), Members were assured that engagement continued to take place to ensure that appropriate members of staff continued to contribute towards improvement themes and actions. The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) was confident that other 'suggestions' arising from the consultation questionnaire were currently being addressed in an appropriate manner.

The SIP was discussed at the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) Meeting held on 11 September 2019. The representative bodies present, which included the Fire Brigade Union, Unison and the Fire Officers Association, were supportive of the approach taken and acknowledged some of the work that had already taken place to make improvements following the publication of the HMICFRS report. No specific suggestions were received from representative bodies as party of the consultation process.

The organisational health check had also now been completed and the outcomes of this would be incorporated into the SIP. Also reflective in the SIP was the different avenues that staff could access to report a grievance.

Members questioned how outcomes would be recorded and monitored as the SIP simply set out the proposed actions. Outcomes would be recorded under individual directorate plans, rather than the SIP. Members requested that outcomes against the actions in the Service Improvement Plan be reported to Members in the future.

**Resolved** - (a) That the Service Improvement Plan (SIP) be approved for publication on the Authority's website;

(b) that Members receive the progress updates as a standing item for future Authority and Governance, Audit & Scrutiny Committee meetings, and

(c) that outcomes against the actions in the Service Improvement Plan be reported to Members in the future.

**74/19 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS/PUBLIC - Resolved** - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

In making its decision the Authority confirmed that having regard to all the circumstances it was satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

**75/19 CYBER SECURITY - INTERNAL AUDIT OUTCOMES** - The Director of Service Delivery Support submitted a report, presented by Alan Maltby - Head of IT, that set out the work undertaken as part of the 2018/19 Audit Plan to assess the Service's vulnerability to a phishing attack by running a simulation exercise.

**Resolved** - That the report be received.

*Meeting closed at 12.07pm.*