

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY

30 OCTOBER 2020

Members

Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:

Councillors Chadwick, Davison, Dennis, Fox, Green, Jefferson, Smith and West

Representing Hull City Council:

Councillors Chambers, Dad, Nicola, Randall and Singh

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Barfield, James, Shepherd and Swinburn

Representing North Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Briggs (*Chairperson*), Grant, Sherwood and Waltham MBE

Officers of Humberside Fire & Rescue Service

Phil Shillito - Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Executive Director Service Delivery, Kevin Wilson - Executive Director of Corporate Services/Section 151 Officer, Steve Topham - Director of Service Delivery Support, Niall McKiniry - Director of Service Improvement, Jason Kirby - Area Manager (Projects), Mathew Buckley - Monitoring Officer/Secretary and Gareth Naidoo - Committee Manager

Also in attendance:

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

Doug Chapman, Andrew Smith, Mandy Thomlinson and Clive Vertigans were in attendance as observers.

The remote meeting took place via video conference (Zoom).

TRIBUTE TO FORMER COUNCILLOR PETE ALLEN - The Authority paid tribute to the Former Lord Mayor of Hull City Councillor Pete Allen and former Member of the Authority who passed away recently.

109/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor McMurray and from Keith Hunter - Police and Crime Commissioner for Humberside Police.

110/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - No declarations were made.

111/20 MINUTES - Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 25 September 2020 be received as a correct record, subject to Councillor Dennis being recorded as present.

112/20 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS - There were no questions.

113/20 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS - No petitions or requests for a deputation had been received under Rule 13, Part 4 of the Constitution.

114/20 COMMUNICATIONS - The following communication was reported:

- (i) **Code of Ethics consultation** - a consultation document 'Code of Ethics', founded on Nolan Principles of public life and which combined with Fire & Rescue Service ethical principles, had been circulated to Members and with a response due to be submitted Monday, 2 November.
- (ii) **Fit for the Future consultation** - a consultation document on 'Fit for the Future', a strategy for reform in the sector, had been received by the Service and circulated to Members. - - response due 19 November. Response would be drafted in consultation with Chairperson and Group Secretaries for submission by 19 November 2020. The response and subject would form part of the Member Day on 27 November 2020.

115/20 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNT - PERIOD ENDING 30 SEPTEMBER 2020 - The Executive Director of Corporate Services/S.151 Officer submitted a report that highlighted the current financial position based on information up to 30 September 2020.

The summary estimated outturn position for the current financial year based on information to 30 September 2020 is as follows:-

CATEGORY	2020/21 OUTTURN PROJECTION
HFA	
Revenue Budget	£210k underspend
Capital Programme	£4.664m expenditure against the £6.718m allocation
Pensions Account	£11.187m deficit

This was the second set of Management Accounts for the 2020/21 financial year and further updates would be brought to the Authority based on the periods ending 31/12/20 and 28/2/21.

The Service had been responding to the COVID-19 crisis and costs had been incurred on staffing, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and also IT equipment to support agile working. Limited costs were incurred before the close of the 2019/20 financial year (£9k).

Further costs had been incurred in the current financial year as the Service's response to the crisis has intensified. Spend and commitments up to 30 September 2020 in the current year are £712,000 to be met from the £919,000 COVID-19 grant from MHCLG.

Further details on all of these areas were available electronically alongside the agenda papers on the Fire Authority's website <https://humbersidefire.gov.uk/fire-authority/fire-authority-documents>.

Members took assurance from the report and the Authority's financial position for the period ending 30 September 2020.

Resolved - That the report be received.

116/20 FINANCIAL OUTLOOK 2021/22 ONWARDS - The Executive Director of Corporate Services/S.151 Officer submitted a report that provided further update on the Medium-Term Financial Planning (MTFP) process for 2021/22 onwards, building on the report that was considered at the meeting of the Authority on 25 September 2020.

Officers were tasked at the meeting of the Authority on 25 September 2020 to consider the range of options outlined below as a way of bringing the budget back into balance for 2021/22 and therefore placing less reliance on the Authority's reserves over the life of the MTFP.

Options considered to bring the budget back into balance were as follows:

- Reducing the Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) budget line which is the Authority's revenue budget contribution to funding the Capital Programme;
- A scheduled review of the Authority's method for calculating the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) which was signalled in the Treasury Management Strategy report for 2020/21. This work will use the annuity method for the calculation and bring the Authority's approach in line with other local authorities;
- Non-pay efficiencies – further efficiencies in the Authority's discretionary non-pay budgets;
- Service-wide efficiencies which may affect the service we are able to deliver to our communities. These efficiencies are likely to have a longer lead-in time and therefore would need to be agreed so that any benefits could be achieved for the 2022/23 year from 1 April 2022;
- Reserves – the Authority's reserves remain in a solid position and some application of reserves could be appropriate to ease the Authority through the short to medium-term financial turbulence created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The table below reflected the latest position for 2021/22 as a result of the measures that had been considered above as well as any other material changes that have occurred since the meeting of the Authority on 25 September 2020.

2021/22 Financial Year		
2021/22 Projection from 25 September HFA	£1.34M deficit	
Changes to the MTFP since the 25 September meeting		
Reduction in Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	(£0.68M)	**Move the Authority's calculation onto the annuity basis in line with other Local Authorities.
Reduction in Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO)	(£0.20M)	Reduce revenue budget contribution to the funding of the Capital Programme from £1.0M to £0.8M.
Non-pay efficiency savings	(£0.13M)	2% efficiency saving.
Reduction in Government Grant income	£0.17M	Revise Government Grant change down from 1% to 0% due to recent reductions in inflation to below 1%.
2021/22 Projection based on information to late October 2020	£0.50M deficit	

** The move to the annuity basis for the calculation of the Authority's MRP will be brought to Members for formal approval at the 7 December HFA meeting as part of the mid-year Treasury Management Review for 2020/21.

Some of the measures outlined in the above table (the MRP change and the reduction in the application of RCCO) would result in the Authority's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) increasing slightly over the short-to-medium term. It was felt that this change was manageable given the current financial backdrop. Inevitably the Authority's borrowing in the long-term would need to match the CFR which would carry a borrowing cost in the revenue budget and be spread over the long-term.

Further work will be undertaken on the MTFP before the next update at the Authority

meeting on 7 December 2020. More information should be available on various key elements of income and expenditure by this date.

Appendix 1 of the report set out the latest position on the MTFP for 2021/22 to 2024/25 as a result of the changes described in the table above. It showed a reduction in the draw on the Authority's reserves over the life of the Plan and further work would be undertaken to minimise the impact on reserves. A further update report would be brought back to the meeting of the Authority on 7 December 2020.

Significant volatility and uncertainties would impact on the Authority's MTFP over the coming months and therefore it was considered prudent that options for Service-wide efficiencies be outlined at an upcoming Member Day. This would give Members an initial overview of the options that were available should such a step need to be taken to ensure that the Authority continued to run on a solid financial footing.

Resolved - That the report be received.

117/20 SECONDMENT OF SECTION 151 - The Chief Officer/Chief Executive submitted a report that provided an update around the secondment of the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Head of Finance, for two days a week to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC).

In October 2019 Members approved that the Section 151 Officer for the Authority (a statutory role created by the Local Government Act 1972, which was designated by the Authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Services under article 11.2 of the HFA's Constitution) split their time between Humberside Fire Authority (HFA) and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) 3 days a week with HFA and 2 days with OPCC in order to also act in the capacity as the Section 151 Officer for the PCC.

This had been an effective working relationship between the OPCC and the Authority. The OPCC Chief Executive and Chief Fire Officer had an established working relationship and regular contact to discuss the arrangement and any issues that might occur. No negative issues had occurred as yet.

The Chief Fire Officer was content that the secondment arrangements were robust enough and provided sufficient time, skills and experience to ensure the interests of the Authority and the Service were protected.

Members took assurance that the existing arrangements were providing the Authority with suitable financial governance, whilst achieving the anticipated resilience and financial benefits.

Resolved - That the report be received.

118/20 SERVICE PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT - QUARTER 1 (APRIL - JUNE 2020) - The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report that provided a service performance and risk summary for the period April to June 2020.

Regular performance and risk reviews were undertaken internally to jointly review any issues at Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), and Project level. SLT provided the oversight of Projects and therefore there were two levels of risk register; one for Strategic Risks and separate registers for individual projects.

Following the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic the Service took quick and decisive action aligned with Government guidelines to protect the welfare of staff, without interruption to its emergency response function. The resulting impact of the pandemic, for quarter 1 reporting, influenced the type and frequencies of activities the Service conducted (as set out at Appendix 3). The Service would be subject to HMICFRS COVID-19 Inspection in the Q3 reporting period.

Accidental fires in dwellings were above the upper threshold during April and May. This was likely due to lockdown when more people were at home than would normally be the case. The majority of the fires were cooking related, and this would have been affected by the closure of restaurants and takeaways meaning that more people were cooking at home. The number of incidents started to reduce as more of those venues opened and some the easing of lockdown measures took place.

Accidental fires in other primary property types were also higher than the upper threshold during April and May and could also have been impacted by more people being at home. Over 50 per cent of those fires involved sheds and garages and over half of this involved spread from either an accidental or a deliberately lit secondary fire. Secondary fires, in general, were lower during the lockdown period than normal.

All performance and risk information was managed through automated systems which enabled managers at all levels to have access to information which was as up to date as possible, and in many instances was live information.

Members took assurance from the Service's proactive approach to performance and risk management and congratulated the Service on its response times.

Resolved - That the report be received.

119/20 REDUCTION OF UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS - The Director of Service Improvement and the Director of Service Delivery Support submitted a joint report that updated on the progress made prior to and since the implementation date of the Unwanted Fire Signals (UWFS) policy.

The Authority approved the implementation of the Unwanted Fire Signal (UWFS) reduction policy which was introduced on 1 October 2019. Attendance to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) had decreased and non-attendance had increased. Fire Alarms attended had reduced by 24 per cent over the last 12 months (October 2019 to September 2020). The number of fire alarms not attended had increased by 23 per cent over the same 12 months. There was a marked increase in the number of safety activities delivered with the extra capacity introduced from reducing false alarms.

Prior to the commencement of the project on 1 October 2020, 14 per cent of total incident attendance was due to false alarms (Due to Apparatus) in commercial premises. In the six months (October 2019 to March 2020) since the policy was implemented (prior to the impact of COVID-19), this had reduced to 11 per cent.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, the charge levy was suspended with many businesses in lockdown however, engagement activity continued where possible. The charging mechanism was suspended from 1 April 2020 to 1 September 2020.

Members noted the intention to review the position further and present further options in March 2021.

Resolved - That the report be received.

120/20 URGENT ITEM: GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY PHASE 1 REPORT - GAP ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLAN - The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report that provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Service in response to the tragic events that occurred on 14 June 2017 at Grenfell Tower.

The Chairperson agreed that the report be treated as urgent in order that it coincided with the first anniversary of the Grenfell Tower Phase 1 Public Inquiry report published.

In the immediate aftermath of the tragic event, a Building Safety Group was established undertaking several workstreams including the coordinating of immediate inspections of high-rise residential buildings in the Humberside area.

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 (GTIP1) report was published on 30 October 2019. Following an initial assessment, the Service appointed a Temporary Area Manager to undertake a gap analysis of the report recommendations and produce an action plan to close any identified gaps.

An interim report presented to the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) in June 2020 resulted in the approval to establish a Grenfell Project Team to progress workstreams in key areas identified through the gap analysis. A further report presented to SLT in October introduced a completed gap analysis of the Service position versus the recommendations and an associated action plan to close the identified gaps, mitigating any risk to the Service.

Due to the protracted nature of national workstreams, SLT had agreed that the Service should continue to make progress against the locally developed gap analysis and action plan whilst monitoring the progress of the national workstreams.

Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry commenced on 27 January 2020 and examined the causes of the events, including how Grenfell Tower could be in a condition which allowed the fire to spread in the way identified in Phase 1. Phase 2 had been subject to several delays due to the impact of COVID-19. The Grenfell Project team would continue to monitor the progress of Phase 2, providing updates to SLT and the Authority as appropriate.

Members took assurance that the required actions and risks to the Service from the GTIP1 report were being managed effectively.

Resolved - That the report be received.

121/20 HMICFRS UPDATE - The Director of Service Improvement provided the Authority with a verbal update in relation to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service's (HMICFRS).

A thematic COVID-19 inspection by HMICFRS had undertaken from the week commencing 12 October 2020. No formal feedback had been received at this stage, however, informal feedback had been shared with the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive which indicated that the Service had had plans in place and activated them promptly and properly. An update on the inspection would be received at the Member Day on 27 November 2020.

Resolved - That the update be noted.

122/20 COVID-19 UPDATE - The Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Deputy Chief Executive provided a verbal update on the Service's response to and future plans relating to Covid-19.

During this second wave of the pandemic a total of 190 people had been tested for COVID-19 symptoms through the Service (120 staff members and 70 house hold members of those staff). The Service had received 144 negative results and 23 positive results. In comparison during the first wave of the pandemic the Service only received four positive COVID-19 test results.

Public Health England (PHE) was satisfied that the Service had taken all the necessary and appropriate steps to reduce the contact and reduce the spread of the virus during this period.

Resolved - That the update be noted.