

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY

30 APRIL 2021

PRESENT:

Members

Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:

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

Representing Hull City Council:

Councillors Chambers, Dad, McMurray, Randall and Singh

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Shepherd and Swinburn

Representing North Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Briggs (*Chairperson*), Grant and Sherwood

Officers of Humberside Fire & Rescue Service

Chris Blacksell - Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, Phil Shillito - Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Executive Director Service Delivery, Kevin Wilson - Executive Director of Corporate Services/Section 151 Officer, Jason Kirby - Temporary Director of People and Development, Paul McCourt - Director of Service Delivery, Niall McKiniry - Director of Service Improvement, 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 (presented Minute 52/21), Andrew Smith and Mandy Thomlinson were in attendance as observers.

Internal Auditor

Andrew McCulloch - Director of Audit (TIAA) (presented Minute 54/21)

HMICFRS

Davinder Johal - Service Liaison Lead (Merseyside FRS, Humberside FRS and Durham & Darlington FRS)

The meeting was held remotely via video conference (Zoom).

TRIBUTE TO COUNCILLOR - Members paid tribute to former Councillor Rita Hudson (East Riding of Yorkshire Council) and former Member of the Authority who had recently passed away.

46/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Barfield, James, Nicola and Waltham, and Keith Hunter - Police and Crime Commissioner for Humberside Police.

47/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - No declarations were made.

48/21 MINUTES - Resolved - That the minutes of the meetings of the Authority held on 12 and 26 March 2021 be received as a correct record.

49/21 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS - There were no questions.

50/21 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS - No petitions or requests for a deputation had been received under Rule 13, Part 4 of the Constitution.

51/21 COMMUNICATIONS - The following communication was reported:

- (i) **New SLT Structure** - Consultation had now been undertaken. The FBU had disagreed with the revised structure. Further communication across the Service to communicate better the new structure and clarifying that the new structure would not see an increase in staff numbers to the Command structure.
- (ii) **Fire Safety Guide** - Fire safety guides for high rise buildings had been removed. The Chair would be writing to Chair of Fire Safety Committee to express concerns over this course of action.

52/21 DRAFT MINUTES OF GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY (GAS) COMMITTEE - 12 APRIL 2021 - Doug Chapman, Chairperson of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee, presented the draft minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 April 2021.

Resolved - That the draft minutes of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny (GAS) Committee held on 12 April 2021 be received.

53/21 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS 2020/21 PERIOD ENDING 29 FEBRUARY 2021 - The Executive Director of Corporate Services/S.151 Officer submitted a report highlighting the current financial position based on information to 28 February 2021.

The summary estimated outturn position for the current financial year based on information to 28 February 2021 was as follows:-

CATEGORY	2020/21 OUTTURN PROJECTION
HFA	
Revenue Budget	£444k underspend
Capital Programme	£3.155m expenditure against the £6.752m allocation
Pensions Account	£11.157m deficit

In arriving at the estimated outturn position for the revenue budget (an underspend of £444k) some important provisions had been made for revenue projects that would require funding to be carried forward into 2021/22. Specifically these were:-

- £150k to meet the costs of the Uniform Replacement Project which would now be delivered in 2021/22;
- £150k to meet the costs of the replacement of the boat capability and associated vehicles and equipment;
- £400k to partially meet the Authority's likely contribution to the infrastructure replacement costs in 2021/22 for the East Coast and Hertfordshire Control Room Consortium (EHCRC) partnership;

- £100k of the grant funding issued by the Home Office to be carried forward to meet costs associated with the Grenfell Project and Protection initiatives.

This was the final set of Management Accounts for the 2020/21 financial year and work was now underway on producing the outturn position and Annual Accounts for the 2020/21 financial year.

It was queried whether further costs had been incurred due to Covid-19. It was confirmed that the vast majority of costs had been met by the initial grant from Government.

Resolved - That the report be received.

54/21 INTERNAL AUDIT - DIRECTOR OF AUDIT OPINION AND ANNUAL REPORT (2020/21) -

This is the 2020/21 Annual Report by TIAA on the internal control environment at Humberside Fire & Rescue Service. The annual internal audit report summaries the outcomes of the reviews we have carried out on the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control. This report is designed to assist Humberside Fire Authority in making its annual governance statement.

There were no areas reviewed by internal audit where it was assessed that the effectiveness of some of the internal control arrangements provided 'limited' or 'no assurance'. Internal Audit had analysed their findings/recommendations by risk area and these were summarised below.

Risk Area	Urgent	Important	Routine
Directed			
Governance Framework	-	6	5
Risk Mitigation	-	-	-
Compliance	-	6	9
Delivery			
Performance Monitoring	-	2	1
Financial Constraint	-	-	-
Resilience	-	-	1

It was queried what work had been undertaken by the Service to progress the 14 recommendations classed as 'Important'. The vast majority of the recommendations had been implemented with timescales established to implement the remaining recommendations.

Resolved - That the Director of Internal Audit Opinion and Annual Report (2020/21) be received.

55/21 DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/21 - The Executive Director of Corporate Services/ S.151 Officer and Monitoring Officer/Secretary submitted the draft Annual Governance Statement 2021/22.

The CIPFA/SOLACE good governance framework brought together a number of governance principles and requirements, including replacing the previous Statement of Internal Control with a new Annual Governance Statement (AGS) from 2007/08.

The AGS took account of CIPFA Bulletin 06 issued 11 February 2021 providing guidance relevant for the annual review of the system of internal control and publication of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS). This guidance concerned the impact of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic on governance in local government bodies and the requirements of the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 CIPFA and Solace (the Framework). It also took into account the introduction of the CIPFA Financial Management Code 2019 (FM Code) during 2020/21.

The report set out a draft AGS in respect to 2020/21. Given the content of the Statement, it was felt desirable that the Authority should specifically review the AGS separately from the Annual Accounts, although the AGS would form part of the Annual Accounts once approved on 25 June 2021.

The GAS Committee received the draft Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 at its meeting of 12 April 2021 (Minute 37/21 refers).

Members commended the draft Statement and work undertaken by officers in preparing it.

Resolved - That the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22, as set out at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

56/21 PERFORMANCE REPORTING 2021/22 - The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report that provided information regarding the reporting of Service Level performance for the period 2021/22.

Members approved a transition from quarterly performance reporting to bi-annual at the meeting of the Authority on 12 March 2021. As detailed in the Business Planning Framework period April - September 2021 would be reported in October 2021 and period October 2021 - March 2022 would be reported in June 2022 after the Authority's AGM (from 2022 onwards as 2020/21 performance reports would include the period to 31 March 2021). Report 2 would show cumulative performance over the full 12-month period. This negated the need for a separate Annual Performance Report, which would be replaced with an interactive end of year summary, in a similar manner to how Siren was produced and circulated electronically to Members.

Cyclical performance reporting would be supplemented by exception reporting of relevant trends/incidents or events to Members at meetings of the Authority or at Member Days. Members would also continue to benefit from Local Authority focussed performance reporting and Q&A, at meetings held by District Managers and during Member Champion discussions with Directors. This change was intended to make cyclical performance reporting more meaningful for Members, as performance would be reported over a longer period enabling Service level performance trends and the impact of safety interventions to be demonstrated.

Biannual performance reporting will include the following:

- a. Performance and Risk
- b. Occupational Health and Wellbeing/Health Safety and Environment
- c. Operational Assurance
- d. Absence Management
- e. Workforce Planning

Performance against all of our Strategic Objectives will be monitored and retrospectively reported to Humberside Fire Authority (HFA) on a bi-annual basis.

Members welcomed the continuing district meetings, along with Member Days and Member Champion Days.

Resolved - That the approach for reporting performance during 2021/22 be approved.

57/21 SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS - The Director of Service Delivery Support submitted that outlined the progress made to the Service's safeguarding arrangements and organisational development approach following a review against the National Fire Chief Council's (NFCC) Safeguarding Self-Assessment Toolkit.

NFCC's key objective was to develop a standardised approach to safeguarding for Fire and Rescue Services. The review had led to the Service introducing some strategic changes, re-aligning

managerial roles, adding safeguarding responsibility to others and consideration to governance, accountability, and reporting arrangements. The Self-Assessment Toolkit consisted of nine separate categories.

This report identified the progress made during the last year, particularly the influences on safeguarding during the timespan of COVID-19 pandemic, together with a summary of progress against each of the nine sections.

Members took assurance that the Service was well positioned in this area, particularly since the launch of the NFCC Self-Assessment Toolkit for Safeguarding.

Resolved - That the report be received.

58/21 USE OF DELEGATED POWERS UNDER FIRE AUTHORITY CONSTITUTION BY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE 2020/21 - The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer/Secretary submitted a report that provided the Authority with details of the decisions taken by the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive during 2020/21 to vary the establishment, under his delegated powers within the Fire Authority Constitution.

The Scheme of Delegation set out in the Constitution (Part 3, Section B) gave the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive delegated authority as follows:

“(m) (vi) to vary in any one financial year the overall establishment to a maximum of 0.5% of total annual budget (provided that such a variation does not affect more than 10 permanent full-time equivalent posts), and provided that any such variations are within the approved Budget (and confirmed by the S.151 Officer) and are in accordance with the approved Strategic Plan (and IRMP) of the HFA. The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive shall report on an annual basis to the HFA setting out the basis upon which such powers have been exercised.”

In the year 2020/21 the following substantive establishment change (not including temporary changes or those approved by the Fire Authority as part of a HFA report) had been approved under the delegated authority given to the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive:

- Creation of one additional post in Corporate Assurance - Information Governance Officer.

Resolved - That the report be received.

59/21 CALL FOR EVIDENCE - REMOTE MEETINGS - The Monitoring Officer/Secretary informed Members of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's call for evidence to seek the views on the use of the current arrangements which had provided express provision for local authorities to hold meetings remotely or in a hybrid format during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Government was requesting evidence about the use of the current arrangements for local authorities to meet remotely or in hybrid format, as set out in the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (and the equivalent regulations for Wales and Northern Ireland) under powers granted by section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Those regulations came into force on 4 April 2020 and applied to meetings taking place before 7 May 2021. The powers in section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 were brought in specifically to make express provision for local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to deal with the challenges of holding physical meetings during the coronavirus pandemic. They had helped local authorities to redeploy resources to deal with the pandemic and ensure that essential business continued whilst protecting the health and safety of their members, officers and the public.

The Government was aware that experience of remote meetings had been varied, and that while the experience of managing and participating in remote meetings had grown considerably

during the period since the remote meetings regulations came into force, there had been examples of the difficulties this format had posed for some authorities.

The Government had received representations from individual local authorities and sector representative organisations making the case for permanent express provision for remote meetings. The government was keen to hear from interested parties about the pros and cons of making such arrangements permanent in England and the use of the arrangements to date. In particular, the Government was keen to receive any quantitative data that could be included to substantiate the responses submitted.

11 questions had been published by the Government, with the call for evidence due to last for 12 weeks from 25 March 2021. The deadline for submission was 17 June 2021.

Members considered the 11 questions and a response was drafted, as set out at Appendix 1 to these Minutes. Members were also encouraged to submit their own responses direct to the Government.

Overall it was felt that there was no substitute for face to face meetings, however the option to hold hybrid meetings and some meetings remotely provided greater flexibility for Members from a work life balance perspective and allowed greater participation due to the reduction in travel.

Resolved - That the response to the Government's Call for Evidence, as set out at Appendix 1 to these Minutes, be approved and submitted to the Government.

60/21 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).

In February 2021 the Home Office appointed Andy Cooke as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Inspectors of Fire & Rescue Services. Mr Cooke had now taken up post and would be primarily responsible for the inspection and other work of HMICFRS in relation to the northern region so the Service looked forward to working with him in the future.

Tranch 1 inspections have now begun. The Service would be in Tranch 2 of the inspections (between September 2021 and Spring 2022). In interim the Service was required to submit significant data returns throughout the year to inform some of the inspection work.

Progress against Service Improvement Plan continued with significant progress being made to the work of Occupational Health and Wellbeing. Likewise progress continue to be made against the recommendations from the Grenfell inquiry and the Director of Service Delivery Support was continue work on prevention arrangements.

Resolved - That the update be noted.

61/21 COVID-19 UPDATE - The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive provided a verbal update on the Service's response to and future plans relating to Covid-19.

Covid-19 had had a relatively low level impact on the Service from a staffing absence point of view. Staff could now collect Lateral Flow Test (LFT) kits from Service buildings.

2.8m items of PPE, LFT and other equipment had been delivered by the Service throughout the pandemic (100,000 items a week).

Going forward the Service was looking to establish a blended approach for staff working in future, with some staff balancing their time working from home and/or the office.

Resolved - That the update be noted.

Call for Evidence

Questions

The Government would like to gather evidence about the use of the arrangements that make express provision for local authorities to meet remotely or in hybrid format during the coronavirus pandemic, including the arrangements that existed for Scottish Authorities prior to the pandemic.

Q1. Generally speaking, how well do you feel the current remote meetings arrangements work?

- Well

Q2. Generally speaking, do you think local authorities in England should have the express ability to hold at least some meetings remotely on a permanent basis?

- Yes

Q3. What do you think are some of the benefits of the remote meetings arrangements? Please select all that apply.

- ✓ More accessible for local authority members
- ✓ Reduction in travel time for councillors
- ✗ Meetings more easily accessed by local residents
- ✗ Greater transparency for local authority meetings
- ✗ Documents (e.g. minutes, agendas, supporting papers) are more accessible to local residents and others online
- ✗ Easier to chair meetings in an orderly fashion *
- ✗ A virtual format promotes greater equality in speaking time during meetings
- ✗ I do not think there are any benefits to remote meetings

Other comments

- Negative - Having to maintain and monitor chat functions is challenging.
- Positive - There is no substitute for face to face meetings, however the option to hold hybrid meetings and some meetings remotely provide greater flexibility for Members from a work life balance perspective (ie managing other work commitments and childcare responsibilities) and allows greater participation due to the reduction in travel.

Q4. (For local authorities only) Have you seen a reduction in costs since implementing remote meetings in your authority?

- Yes

Q5. What do you think are some of the disadvantages of the remote meetings arrangements, and do you have any suggestions for how they could be mitigated/overcome? Please select all that apply.

- ✗ It is harder for members to talk to one another informally

- ✓ Meetings are less accessible for local authority members or local residents who have a poor-quality internet connection
- ✓ Meetings are less accessible for local authority members or local residents who are unfamiliar with video conferencing/technology
- ✗ There is less opportunity for local residents to speak or ask questions
- ✓ Some find it more difficult to read documents online than in a physical format
- ✗ Debate is restricted by the remote format
- ✗ It is more difficult to provide effective opposition or scrutiny in a remote format
- ✗ It is more difficult to chair meetings in an orderly fashion
- ✗ Virtual meetings can be more easily dominated by individual speakers
- ✗ It might enable democratically elected members to live and perform their duties outside their local area on a permanent basis, therefore detaching them from the communities they serve
- ✗ It may create too substantial a division between the way national democracy (e.g. in the House of Commons) and local democracy is conducted
- ✗ I do not think there are any disadvantages to remote meetings

Q6. What do you think are some of the main advantages of holding face-to-face meetings, as opposed to remote meetings?

- Social interaction

Q7. If permanent arrangements were to be made for local authorities in England, for which meetings do you think they should have the option to hold remote meetings?

- I think local should be able to decide for themselves which meetings they should have the option to meet remotely

Q8. If permanent arrangements were to be made for local authorities in England, in which circumstances do you think local authorities should have the option to hold remote meetings?

- I think local authorities should be able to decide for themselves which circumstances they should have the option to meet remotely

Q9. Would you have any concerns if local authorities in England were given the power to decide for themselves which meetings, and in what circumstances, they have the option to hold remote meetings?

- No

Q10. If yes, do you have any suggestions for how your concerns could be mitigated/overcome?

N/A

Q11. In your view, would making express provision for English local authorities to meet remotely particularly benefit or disadvantage any individuals with protected characteristics e.g. those with disabilities or caring responsibilities?

- Yes

The option to hold hybrid meetings and some meetings remotely provide greater flexibility for Members from a work life balance perspective (ie managing other work commitments and childcare responsibilities) and allows greater participation due to the reduction in travel.