

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY

FRIDAY, 28 APRIL 2023

PRESENT:

Members

Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:

Councillors Abraham, Davison, Dennis, Green, Jefferson, Smith and West

Representing Hull City Council:

Councillors Chambers, Dad and Nicola

Representing North Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Briggs (*Chairperson*) and Grant

Officers of Humberside Fire & Rescue Service

Niall McKiniry - Deputy Chief Fire Officer & Executive Director of Service Delivery, Matthew Sutcliffe - Assistant Chief Fire Officer & Executive Director of Corporate Services, Christine Cooper - Executive Director of People and Development, Kevin Wilson - Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer, Jon Henderson - Area Manager Prevention, Protection, Fleet and Estates, Jason Kirby - Area Manager of Emergency Response, Lisa Nicholson - Monitoring Officer/Secretary and Alison Finn - Committee Manager.

Also in attendance:

External Auditor Gavin Barker (presented Minute 37/23)

Internal Auditor Andrew McCullough (presented Minute 38/23)

The meeting was held at Service Headquarters, Hessle.

31/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies for absence were submitted from Jonathan Evison (Police and Crime Commissioner) and Councillors Belcher, Fox, Lindley, Neal, Patrick, Shepherd, Sherwood, Swinburn and Waltham MBE.

32/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - There were no declarations of interest.

33/23 MINUTES - Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 10 March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

34/23 MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Resolved - That the minutes of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 3 April 2023 be received.

35/23 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS - there were no questions by Members.

36/23 COMMUNICATIONS - there were no communications.

37/23 EXTERNAL AUDIT: ANNUAL STRATEGY MEMORANDUM 2022/23 – Gavin Barker (Mazars) presented the External Audit Annual Strategy Memorandum for the year ending 31 March 2023.

The Authority was advised that the Audit Strategy Memorandum had not significantly changed compared to those of previous years. The Memorandum presented the same three standard fire and rescue service key risks as it had in the previous year. No changes had been made to the fees for the audit, other

than a 5.2 per cent increase from inflation which was funded through Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA). The calculation for misstatements remained the same as previous years with £43,000 sitting as the threshold misstatement to be reported to the Authority.

There were significant workforce challenges across the public auditing sector which was only exacerbated by the return to the 30 September sign off deadline. However, the Authority's audit was relatively simple, so the external auditors were cautiously optimistic to meet the sign off deadline. The impact to the Authority from external auditor performance was minimal, though, there was some effort made to include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the contracts made through PSAA. Ultimately, that proved unfeasible.

The external valuer used in the valuation of land and buildings was, so far, considered to be acceptable by the external auditors. Furthermore, while the external auditors were satisfied that there was not likely to be a change in contributions, the assets and liabilities of the pension fund were likely to vary significantly.

Resolved - That the External Audit Annual Strategy Memorandum 2022/23 be received.

38/23 INTERNAL AUDIT: DIRECTOR OF AUDIT OPINION AND ANNUAL REPORT (2022/23) - Andrew McCullough presented the 2022/23 Annual Report by TiAA on the internal control environment at Humberside Fire and Rescue Service.

In 2022, TiAA commissioned an External Quality Assessment of its internal audit service. The independent assessor was able to conclude that TiAA "generally conforms to the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards". "Generally conforms" is the highest rating that can be achieved using the External Quality Assessment model.

The 2022/23 Annual Audit Plan was approved by the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee for the 65 days of internal audit coverage in the year. There were two changes to the Audit Plan during the year. The audit of Community Fire Risk Information System was replaced by a review of secondary contracts at management request. The ICT management controls audit had been deferred to 2023/24 and will form part of a more detailed review. The changes were both approved by the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

TiAA was satisfied that, for the areas reviewed during the year, Humberside Fire and Rescue Service had reasonable and effective risk management and governance processes in place. That opinion was based solely on the matters that came to the attention of TiAA during the course of the internal audit reviews carried out during the year and was not an opinion of all elements of the risk management, control and governance processes or the ongoing financial viability or their ability to meet financial obligations which must be obtained by the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service from its various sources of assurance.

Resolved - That the Audit Opinion and Annual Report 2022/23 be received.

39/23 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS 2022/23 PERIOD ENDING 28 FEBRUARY 2023 - The Executive Director of Finance/S.151 Officer submitted a report summarising the Management Accounts 2022/23 for the period ending 28 February 2023.

The Authority was forecast an underspend of £0.6m in its revenue budget with the inclusion of the 2023 pay award. The capital account was also underspent by £4.2m as a consequence of slippage on estates work.

Resolved - That the Management Accounts for the period ending 28 February 2023 be received.

40/23 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2022/23 - The Assistant Chief Fire Officer & Executive Director of Corporate Services submitted a report summarising the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23.

It was a requirement of the Fire Authority to publish an Annual Governance Statement on a yearly basis. The report set out the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) in respect of 2022/23. 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, the draft of which would be submitted to the Authority in July 2023.

The Annual Governance Statement set out ensuring that the Authority's business was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and was making economic, efficient, and effective use of its resources through its governance arrangements. The AGS was the formal Statement (signed by the Chairperson of the Fire Authority, the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and other Statutory Officers) that recognised, recorded and published the governance arrangements of the Fire Authority.

Ultimately, officers were content that the Annual Governance Statement was effective in identifying the Authority's Governance position. It was explained that the Constitution was reviewed on an annual basis including issues of schemes of delegation.

The draft Annual Governance Statement was considered by the GAS Committee at its meeting of 3 April 2023 and endorsed to the Authority.

Resolved - That the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 be approved.

41/23 ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STATEMENT 2022/23 - The Assistant Chief Fire Officer & Executive Director of Corporate Services submitted a report on the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Statement 2022/23.

Produced in response to the recommendations within an Internal Audit review of Counter Fraud Arrangements, the annual Anti-Fraud and Corruption Statement covered key actions taken throughout the reporting year to provide an assurance of the processes in place. The report covered whistleblowing, anti-bribery, anti-money laundering and anti-fraud and corruption.

The report was considered by the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny (GAS) Committee at the meeting held 3 April 2023. The Committee endorsed the draft Anti-Fraud and Corruption Statement but suggested the Statement could provide clearer evidence where there had been no cases of reported fraudulent activities. As such under Section 6 of the draft Statement, a further paragraph was inserted to reflect the reporting mechanisms and that the Monitoring Officer and Chair of the GAS Committee, who would be notified of any such incidents, could confirm there had been no reported fraudulent activities.

Resolved - That the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Statement 2022/23 be approved.

42/23 USE OF DELEGATED POWERS BY THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER 2022/23 – The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive submitted a report on the use of delegated powers by the Chief Fire Officer which was presented by The Deputy Chief Fire Officer & Executive Director of Service Delivery.

The report provided the Authority with details of the decisions taken by the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive during 2022/23 to vary the establishment, under his delegated powers within the Fire Authority's Constitution. Members were asked to note that the report concerned only permanent changes to the establishment. Temporary posts, re-gradings and changes in job content where the post remained substantially the same were not included as such decisions were within the remit of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive under the Constitution.

In the year 2022/23 the following substantive establishment change had been approved under the delegated authority given to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive:

- Deletion of a Watch Manager position within the Corporate Assurance section.

Resolved – That the report be received.

43/23 STAFF PAY AWARD - The Executive Director of People and Development submitted a report on the staff pay award.

The report provided the Authority with an update on the pay position of all the staff groups it employed, including current arrangements and awards made over previous years for comparison.

Grey book (operational) staff had accepted a pay offer of 7 per cent for 2022/23 and 5 per cent for 2023/24 from the National Employers (NJC). Green book (non-operational) staff had rejected a pay offer of a flat rate of £1925 for 2023/24 across all pay spines or a minimum increase of 3.88 per cent on all pay spines plus 3.88% on all allowances with effect from April 2023 from the National Employers (NJC) for Local

Gold Book staff had not had a pay increase for over two years and a benchmark review had not taken place since 2008. Members had agreed an external review of senior officer pay should be undertaken during 2023/24. It was the intent of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive to submit a pay summary report to Members of the Authority annually. That would also incorporate, where necessary, a pay claim for Gold Book staff members under the 'twin track' approach as a supplement to the pay summary report.

The table below summarised the pay awards for each staff group since 2017.

Staff Group/Pay Award	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2034/24
Green Book	1%	2%	2%	2.75%	1.75%	£1925	Not agreed
Grey Book	1%	2%	2%	2%	1.5%	7%	5%
Gold Book	1%	2%	2%	2%	1.5%	Not agreed	Not agreed

A 1 per cent pay increase across all staff groups equated to a cost to the Service of £366,000, assumptions for pay awards had been developed to ensure that the Medium-Term Resource Strategy was robust and affordable. Based on previous years, the assumption was made in the Medium-Term Resource Strategy that the Gold book pay offer would be comparable to the Grey book offer and therefore had been funded in the Authority's MTRS.

The Authority's budget was kept under continuous review and the effect of any pay offers/awards that were made that adversely affected the Authority's budget position would be reported in a timely manner and through the quarterly Management Accounts that were considered by the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee and the Authority throughout the financial year.

Resolved - that the Authority note:

- i) That Grey book staff had accepted a pay offer of 7 per cent for 2022/23 and 5 per cent for 2023/24 from the National Employers (NJC) Grey Book.
- ii) That Green book staff had rejected a pay offer of a flat rate of £1925 for 2023/24 across all pay spines or a minimum increase of 3.88 per cent on all pay spines plus 3.88 per cent on all allowances with effect from April 2023 from the National Employers (NJC) for Local Government;
- iii) That the Gold book offer was not comparable to the Grey book offer made to other operational staff and negotiations were ongoing;
- iv) That Gold book staff, unlike Grey and Green book staff were not limited to national collective bargaining and had the facility to negotiate local pay awards through the 'twin track' facility with Humberside Fire Authority.

44/23 REVIEW OF THE PREVENTION STRATEGY - The Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Executive Director of Service Delivery submitted a report on the review of the prevention strategy.

The Service's Prevention Strategy was due for review at the end of the financial year. An increase in fire fatalities, when viewed against previous years, supported the need for a deeper dive review to ensure that Prevention activities were focussed on the most vulnerable from fire. Accidental dwelling fire fatalities for 2022/23 totalled 7 when the average for the previous 5 years had been 5 fatalities. In addition, there were 3 fatalities from a fire following a road traffic collision and 1 from a deliberate fire.

The Service had proactively reviewed the targeting programme, and its work with partners, in line with the data. The Strategy would be amended to broaden the high-risk group and develop partner knowledge to ensure support to the most vulnerable in the community.

The Service's Prevention Strategy broadly had three elements in relation to home fire safety prevention. Those were:

- 1) Proactive targeting of those who were known to be at highest risk of dying in a domestic fire, that risk was identified using national and local fire death data.
- 2) Referrals from partner agencies, such as Health Care, Local Authorities, Police, of those who were deemed to need fire prevention support and advice.
- 3) Post incident targeting. Where properties within proximity of a recent incident were targeted.

In 2022/23 there were 5,110 properties within the proactive targeting group, 1,088 referrals were received and 751 post incident interventions were conducted. The key intervention, for those cases, was a home fire safety visit where personnel assessed risk, gave safety advice and installed smoke detection. The Service had reviewed its proactive targeting programme and as a result, proactive targeting of the high risk group would increase from 5,110 properties to approximately 9,000 properties. Accidental fires in the home that resulted in a fatality would be the main focus of prevention activity. The resourcing model used could be flexed to meet that increased demand.

Resolved - That the report be received and the Strategy be discussed further at a future Member Day.

45/23 EFFICIENCY & PRODUCTIVITY PLAN 2023/24 - The Executive Director of Finance and S.151 Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Executive Director of Corporate Services submitted a report on the Efficiency and Productivity Plan for 2023/24.

The Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire required all Fire and Rescue Authorities to produce an Efficiency and Productivity Plan for the period 2023/24, aligned to Home Office guidance regarding content. The Plan explained how Humberside Fire Authority aimed to deliver efficiencies and increased productivity, against national targets, set for 2021/22 – 2024/25 Spending Review period.

The draft Authority Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2023/24 provided detail of the efficiency and productivity progress of Humberside Fire Authority against the national goals and with due consideration of efficiencies being made, alongside the uptake of the full £4.99 Precept Tax rise flexibility offered within the Spending Review. The Plan was published on the Authority's website and the Authority committed to publishing an annual report on the progress of the Efficiency and Productivity Plan on its website, alongside the Annual Statement of Assurance, in July of each year.

The Authority had achieved non-pay efficiency savings of 2.25 per cent during 2022/23 and planned to achieve 2.42 per cent during 2023/24 and 2.46 per cent during 2024/25. The operational and non-operational workforce was managed through workforce planning arrangements. That identified existing and future vacancies and considered the role requirements and recruitment needs against current priorities, to utilise vacancies more effectively in deciding whether the role be immediately filled or considered for reallocation and re-evaluation into other parts of the Service in line with Service needs.

The Service reported a total of £1.12m in cost savings or avoidance since April 2020 and would continue to use the most appropriate procurement route to meet the needs of the Authority. The Authority was committed to pursuing a 3 per cent increase in productivity in line with national targets, set for the 2021/22 – 2024/25 Spending Review period.

Resolved - That the Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2023/24 for the period 2023/24, as submitted to the Home Office, be approved.

46/23 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER UPDATE - The Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Executive Director of Service Delivery provided a verbal update.

- i. The Efficiency and Productivity Plan was now published on the website.
- ii. The Government was consulting on minimum service levels needed by public services during periods of industrial action. As consultees, the Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer would provide a response in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority.
- iii. The Chief Fire Officer currently chaired the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) on a voluntary basis. A trial was commencing with a paid officer chairing the forum and the Humberside LRF had

volunteered to be one of the 10 forums participating in the trial with a decision to be made later in the year.

- iv. A request had been received for more items to support Ukraine as reserves had almost been exhausted. The UK Fire and Rescue Service had sent three convoys of help including vehicles and would send the fourth and final convey shortly, with the Authority contributing some Fire Fighter personal protective equipment (PPE).
- v. The additional Home Office grant for 2023/24 had been received.
- vi. The Information Commissioner's Office had closed their investigation into the Authority's cyber incident with no action required.
- vii. Bernie McKiernan, a female on-call fire fighter from Snaith Fire Station, who had previously been awarded the British Empire Medal, had been invited and would be attending the King's Coronation on 6 May 2023 at West Minster Abbey.

Resolved - That the update be noted.