

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY
GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 NOVEMBER 2019

PRESENT: Independent Co-opted Members Mr D Chapman (Chairperson), Mr J Doyle, Mrs P Jackson, Mr A Smith, Mrs M Thomlinson and Mr C Vertigans

Councillors Briggs attended as an observer.

Miriam Heppell - Director of People and Development, Paul McCourt - Director of Service Delivery, Niall McKiniry - Director of Service Improvement, Martyn Ransom - Head of Finance, Simon Rhodes - Head of Corporate Assurance, Mathew Buckley - Monitoring Officer/Secretary, Samm Campbell - Committee Manager, Andrew McCulloch - Internal Audit (TIAA) and Ross Woodley - External Audit (Mazars) were also present.

The meeting was held at the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Kingston upon Hull. Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m.

PROCEDURAL

47/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies for absence were received from Mr M Allingham.

48/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - There were no declarations of interest.

49/19 MINUTES - *Resolved* - That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 September 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

50/19 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES, OTHER THAN ON THE AGENDA - There were no matters arising from the minutes.

GOVERNANCE

51/19 UPDATE: MATTERS ARISING/FEEDBACK FROM FIRE AUTHORITY - The Monitoring Officer/Secretary provided a verbal update summarising the consideration given by the Authority at its meeting on 30 September 2019 to the draft minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 September 2019 and also provided feedback on other items considered by the Fire Authority at its meetings of 30 September and 25 October 2019.

Resolved - That the report be received.

AUDIT

52/19 EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT - Ross Woodley (Mazars) presented a report summarising the progress made in relation to external audit for 2019/20.

Of the seven national publications summarised in the report, three referred to the future of external audit in local authorities and fire and rescue services. In 2018/19, 40 percent of audit opinions had been submitted late as a result of financial uncertainty. The Service's own audit had, however, not been submitted late due to its proactive and cooperative approach.

Mazars was in the process of planning the 2019/20 audit, which would commence with on-site work in December 2019. The Audit Strategy Memorandum was due to be presented to the Committee at its meeting of 24 January 2020.

Resolved - That the update be received.

53/19 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS UPDATE - Andrew McCulloch (TIAA) submitted a report summarising the progress of TIAA's internal audit 2019/20.

Some audit activity had been delayed, but TIAA remained confident that it would complete its audit plan by the end of the year. An audit of the Service's fleet management had been undertaken and a judgement of 'reasonable assurance' had been achieved. TIAA had arrived at five recommendations following its audit of fleet management. The Committee queried the target implementation date, 31 December 2020, in relation to the recommendation to establish performance measurement thresholds. It seemed to the Committee that the date was not ambitious and that it did not align with the expressed intention to measure and manage performance from the beginning of the 2020/21 financial year. Andrew McCulloch agreed to revisit the implementation date with Service managers.

Resolved - (a) That the update be received,

(b) that the implementation date, 31 December 2020, in relation to the recommendation to establish performance measuring thresholds within fleet management be reviewed.

PERFORMANCE, RISK AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

54/19 PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT (SECOND QUARTER 2019) - The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report summarising the Service's performance in the second quarter of 2019/20.

Prevention Performance	
Accidental Dwelling Fires	5.4% below 3 year average.
Other Accidental Fires (exc. Vehicles)	25.8% above 3 year average.
Deliberate Primary Fires	4.7% above 3 year average.
Deliberate Secondary Fires	1.8% above 3 year average.
Automatic Fire Alarms	5.3% below 3 year average.
Fatalities	0 fatalities (aspirational target 0)
Injuries	14 injuries (aspirational target 0)
Response Performance	
First engine response	7.54% better than target
Second engine response	11.13% better than target

Accidental dwelling fires remained lower than the three-year average. This was particularly positive as it was, statistically, one of the most life-threatening categories of fire. The 'other accidental fires' category had increased in relation to the three year average, but the number of incidents remained low and, following investigations, the underlying causes revealed no concerning trends. Deliberate vehicle fires had increased as a result of the ongoing issues around county-lines drug dealing.

In relation to the East Coast and Hertfordshire Control Room Project (ECHCR), operational tests were due to commence in the afternoon of 11 November 2019. The Project was a complex and critical piece of work, with the potential to achieve significant improvements and efficiencies. If tests were successful, it was possible that the ECHCR would be implemented within the following few weeks.

The Committee asked whether the days around 5 November 2019 (Bonfire Night) had resulted in a heightened number of incidents. The number of incidents on and around 5 November was significantly lower than in previous years. While inclement weather was likely to have been a contributing factor, a good deal of preparatory work had been undertaken by the Service and partner agencies (such as Humberside Police and the four local authorities), including clearing away potential bonfire material.

The Service had introduced a new rota and availability system which would allow it to manage individual employees' availability to populate rotas. This would make a labour-intensive process more efficient. A five-year contract had been awarded.

Resolved - That the report be received.

55/19 HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE REPORT (SECOND QUARTER 2019) - The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report summarising the health and safety data for the second quarter of 2019/20.

During the second quarter of 2019/20, 21 incidents were reported that resulted in personal injury, compared to 29 during the same period in the previous year. As well as representing a 28 percent decrease in incidents from the previous year, this was also below the three-year average (26.3) for the same period. Of the incidents reported, 62 percent related to full-time firefighters, which was representative of the Service's employment profile and the nature of the work undertaken by operational staff. Near-miss reporting had reduced by 37 percent but, with 31 reported near-misses, still remained above the number of reported incidents. This was a positive indicator of improvements to the Service's safety culture.

Resolved - (a) That the report be received, and
(b) that an update on road-traffic collisions be received at a future meeting.

56/19 OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE REPORT (SECOND QUARTER 2019) - The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report summarising the operational assurance data for the second quarter of 2019/20.

Operational assurance was reported according to three areas: safety critical, areas of concern, and exceptional practice. Safety critical reports had reduced from nine in the first quarter to five in the second (45 percent reduction); areas of concern reports had reduced from 100 to 54 (46 percent reduction); and exceptional practice reports had risen from 130 to 202 (55 percent increase). The reduction in safety critical reports and the increase in exceptional practice reports indicated that the Service was performing well operationally. However, the Service would continue to highlight the importance of reporting safety critical practice as well as exceptional practice as they were equally important to the improvement of firefighter safety.

Resolved - That the report be received.

57/19 ABSENCE MANAGEMENT REPORT (SECOND QUARTER 2019) - The Director of People and Development presented a report summarising absence management data for the second quarter of 2019/20.

The Service had recently appointed a Head of Health and Wellbeing. The highest rate of absence had been in the Control Room due to a number of long-term sickness absences. Attendance had continued to improve among full-time firefighters, with an

attendance rate of 95.69 percent. Absence and attendance rates were summarised as follows:

	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	317	29.5	10.75	8.70	4.35
Fire Staff	1175.43	174.82	6.72	10.00	5.00
On Call	556.20	343	1.62	7.00	3.5
Full Time	1846	468	3.94	7.00	3.5
total	3894.63	1015.32	3.84		

	2nd Quarter	2 nd Quarter	2 nd Quarter	Target attendance
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	
Full time	95.86%	96.55%	95.69%	95%
Control	90.71%	97.75%	88.26%	95%
Fire Staff	94.21%	96.53%	94.85%	97%

Mental health remained a priority and a concern for the Service, particularly in relation to non-operational staff. A psychotherapy service had been established on a trial basis. The number of long-term sickness absences was higher than during the same period in the previous year, but the issue was being addressed.

Resolved - That the report be received.

58/19 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS PERIOD ENDING 30 SEPTEMBER 2019 - The Head of Finance provided a report summarising the management accounts for the period ending 30 September 2019.

The management accounts were summarised as follows:

CATEGORY	2019/20 OUTTURN PROJECTION
HFA	
Revenue Budget	£215k overspend
Capital Programme	£4.49m expenditure against £6.608m allocation
Pensions Account	£11.271m deficit

Budgetary pressures had persisted due to the fact that there had been fewer retirements than expected. The personal protection equipment (PPE) used by firefighters was due to be replaced as part of the Capital Programme. The contract for the PPE replacement was undergoing a competitive tendering process. There had been some significant slippage in relation to other Capital projects as they had been re-evaluated in the light of the estates partnership with Humberside Police. The Pensions Account had a budgeted deficit of £11.271m, which would be funded by the Home Office.

Resolved - That the report be received.

59/19 TREASURY MANAGEMENT HALF YEAR REPORT 2019/20 - The Head of Finance provided a report summarising treasury management for the first half of the 2019/20 financial year.

Treasury Management was defined in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIFPA) Code of Practice 2009 as:

“The management of the organisation’s investments and cash-flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities and the pursuit of the optimum performance consistent with those risks.”

The Service had recovered more interest on its investments than expected:

Interest Earned April to September 2019	Rate of return April to September 2019	Benchmark return at 30 September 2019*	Difference (Favourable) April to September 2019
£22k	0.63%	0.57%	(0.06%)

The Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) had recently taken a unilateral decision to increase its interest rates by one percent as a result of the high number of loans it was being asked to make.

Resolved - That the report be received.

60/19 FINAL ACCOUNTS TIMETABLE 2019/20 - The Head of Finance provided a report summarising the final accounts timetable for the 2019/20 financial year.

The process of finalising the accounts for 2019/20 was due to commence earlier than normal in order to assist the Authority’s auditors. The timetable included regular meetings with the external auditor, Mazars, through to the completion of its audit activity in the summer of 2020.

Resolved - That the report be received.

61/19 HMICFRS INSPECTION UPDATE - The Head of Corporate Assurance provided the Committee with a verbal update in relation to Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service’s (HMICFRS).

HMICFRS had opened a consultation on its inspection framework for 2020. Following the consultation, it had been decided that it would continue to inspect fire and rescue services according to the same criteria with some changes of focus to the three pillars ‘effectiveness’, ‘efficiency’ and ‘people’. The Service had posted a link to the consultation on its website (www.humbersidefire.gov.uk).

Resolved - That the update be received.

62/19 TRAINING, PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF OPERATIONAL AND NON-OPERATIONAL STAFF - The Director of People and Development submitted a report in response to the item, ‘Training, Promotion and Development of Operation and Non-operational Staff’, on the Committee’s Scrutiny Programme 2019/20.

During HMICFRS’ recent inspection of the Service, concerns about the equity of learning and development provision across different staff groups had been identified. In

addition, some staff members expressed concern through HMICFRS' survey about the promotion process for operational staff. The Committee had previously resolved to scrutinise this topic in order to provide challenge and assurance to the Service and the Fire Authority.

While the Service had been working to implement long-term changes in its staffing processes, progress had been hindered by the need to recruit to vacant posts under the Director of People and Development. These posts had recently been filled; the final post to have been filled was that of the Head of Health and Wellbeing.

Fundamentally, the issue with training and development had not been equity between operational and non-operational staff groups, but consistency. The Service would always need to prioritise training for operational staff due to the critical and dangerous nature of their roles (in relation to both themselves and residents of the Humberside area). However, as HMICFRS had observed, there was a need to ensure that training and development for non-operational staff was more structured and consistent.

The consistent use of performance development reviews (PDRs) had also been highlighted as an issue. In 2018, the Service had worked to ensure that PDRs were being used meaningfully. Some staff had not known how PDRs should be used and the completion rate had risen from 67 percent to 97 percent in 2019/20. However, research had shown that the quality of the conversations taking place in PDRs was significantly more important than the rate of completion. For this reason, the Service was working to ensure that line-managers were trained to conduct high quality PDRs. The current process was labour-intensive in relation to the administrative aspects of PDRs and the Service was working to automate as much of the administrative process as possible. PDRs had been moved to take place during the fourth quarter of each year to coincide with other end-of-year processes.

Since its inspection by HMICFRS, the Service had implemented a tiered Core Skills Framework. The first tier accounted for the fact that certain knowledge and skills were expected in relation to every post within the Service. The second tier detailed the knowledge and skills needed for each individual post. Together, both elements of the Core Skills Framework could be used to identify training needs for staff. The Service was also developing person specifications for use during recruitment processes. As a result of these pieces of work, every member of staff would understand which skills they would need to develop in order to progress or move into other roles.

The Service was in the process of delivering a significant training programme for senior and middle managers, having started with the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT). This would be followed by a programme of maintenance training on a quarterly basis.

There had been some differences in between the promotion processes used for operational and non-operational staff groups. While non-operational staff had been subject to a relatively standard approach to promotion, whereby roles were advertised and applied for, the operational staff group had made use of a variety of methods including promotion pools. The variety of methods used for operational roles had led to the submission of some grievances due to lack of clarity around the process. The Service would, therefore, use a standard, professional recruitment process in relation to both operational and non-operational roles. The Fire Brigade Union had agreed with this approach.

The Committee asked whether the Service encouraged the progression of high performing members of staff. The Service did not yet have a model in place, but the SLT had begun to consider its approach to talent management. The Service had been using the Apprenticeship Levy to help employees to develop their skills and knowledge, but the process had proven to be problematic and, often, more expensive than alternative training programmes.

The Committee considered that the ongoing work to address the recommendations made by HMICFRS during its inspection of the Service was promising and was keen to remain up-to-date on its progress.

- Resolved** -
- (a) That the report be received;
 - (b) that the Committee be updated with regard to progress against HMICFRS' recommendations relating to training, promotion and PDRs, and
 - (c) that the Committee consider whether to scrutinise this item again as part of its Scrutiny Programme 2020/21.

63/19 GAS COMMITTEE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 2019/20 - The Committee Manager submitted a report summarising the Committee's Scrutiny Programme for 2019/20.

- Resolved** - That the Scrutiny Work Programme be received.

64/19 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.

65/19 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COST RECOVERY MODEL FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE - The Director of Service Improvement and the Service Delivery Manager presented a report in response to the Committee's revised scope for the scrutiny item 'Effectiveness of the Cost Recovery Model for Emergency Medical Response', including further details in relation to the Service's arrangements with East Midlands Ambulance Service.

- Resolved** -
- (a) That the report be received;
 - (b) that the Committee be updated in relation to the Service's review of its cost recovery model for Emergency Medical Response, and
 - (c) that the excellent and life-saving service offered as part of Emergency Medical Response be commended and supported.

Meeting closed at 12.30 pm.