

**HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY**  
**GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**11 APRIL 2022**

**PRESENT:** Independent Co-opted Members Chris Brown, Jim Doyle, Pam Jackson, Kathryn Lavery and Gerry Wareham.

Councillor Briggs and Councillor Green attended as observers.

Phil Shillito - Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Executive Director of Corporate Services, Christine Cooper - Executive Director of People and Development, Matthew Sutcliffe - Temporary Director of Service Improvement, Ruth Gilmour - Head of Human Resources, Sam O'Connor - Head of Organisational Development, Martyn Ransom - Head of Finance, Simon Rhodes - Head of Corporate Assurance, Lisa Nicholson - Monitoring Officer/Secretary, and Sam Campbell - Committee Manager were also present. Andy McCulloch - Internal Audit (TIAA) attended remotely.

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

**PROCEDURAL**

*In the absence of a chairperson, the Monitoring Officer/Secretary assumed the chair and asked Members for nominations for a chairperson for the current meeting. Jim Doyle was elected as chairperson for the meeting.*

*(Jim Doyle in the chair)*

**28/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** - There were no apologies for absence.

**29/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** - Kathryn Lavery declared a non-pecuniary interest insofar as she is the Chair of Yorkshire Ambulance Service's Board.

**30/22 MINUTES - *Resolved*** - That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7 March 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

**31/22 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES, OTHER THAN ON THE AGENDA** - There were no matters arising from the minutes.

**GOVERNANCE**

**32/22 UPDATE: MATTERS ARISING/FEEDBACK FROM FIRE AUTHORITY** - The Monitoring Officer/Secretary provided feedback on items considered by the Fire Authority at its meeting of 11 March 2022.

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

**33/22 DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021/22** - The Temporary Director of Service Improvement submitted a report summarising the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22.

The Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 would accompany the Authority's audited accounts and had been submitted to the Committee for consideration. The Statement covered three key functions of the Service: economy, efficiency and

effectiveness. The Committee made a series of recommendations for changes to the Statement.

**Resolved -** (a) That all of the documents cited within the Statement be hyperlinked within it for ease of reference;

(b) that reference be made within the Statement to gender pay gap and the associated governance processes;

(c) that the reference within the Statement to the Service's whistle-blowing procedures be strengthened;

(d) that the Statement include references to the Service's General Data Protection Regulation duties, and

(e) that the Statement include references to the Service's assurance processes concerning emergency preparedness.

**34/22 FIRE AUTHORITY MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT** - The Monitoring Officer/Secretary submitted a report summarising the revised Fire Authority Member Code of Conduct.

The Fire Authority was required to adopt a Code of Conduct in order to set expectations for the conduct of Members of the Fire Authority and its committees (including co-opted Members). The content of the Code needed to be consistent with the seven principles of public life (the Nolan Principles). Following a series of workshops and consultation processes in recent months, the Local Government Association had produced a revised model code of conduct and the Fire Authority was due to consider amending its Code of Conduct accordingly at its meeting due to be held on Friday 29 April 2022.

**Resolved -** (a) That the role of chairpersons be defined within the Code, particularly with regard to declarations of interest;

(b) that the Code be revised to clarify the consequences of a breach of the Code of Conduct;

(c) that the term 'councillors' be replaced within the code to reflect the fact that it applies to Members of the Fire Authority and its committees (including co-opted Members), and

(d) that reference be made to the Nolan Principles within the Code but that they not be included in full.

### **Audit**

**35/22 DRAFT INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2021/22** - Andy McCulloch (TIAA) presented the draft Internal Audit Report 2021/22.

One of the individual audit reports remained in draft form awaiting management comments, but no substantial changes to the draft Internal Audit Report 2021/22 were expected prior to its receipt by the Fire Authority at its meeting due to be held on 29 April 2022. During the audit period, TIAA had issued the following assurances: two substantial, six reasonable and one limited. TIAA had issued the following recommendation: one urgent, 14 important and eight routine. The Head of Internal Audit's annual opinion was as follows:

TIAA is satisfied that, for the areas reviewed during the year, Humberside Fire & Rescue has reasonable and effective risk management, control and governance processes in place.

This opinion is 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 is not an opinion on all elements of the risk management, control and governance processes or the ongoing financial viability or your ability to meet financial obligations which must be obtained by the Service from its various sources of assurance.

**Resolved -** That the draft Internal Audit Report 2021/22 be received.

### **FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE**

**36/22 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 28 FEBRUARY 2022 -** The Head of Finance submitted the Management Accounts for the period ending 28 February 2022.

The Service was forecasting an underspend of £1m in its revenue budget. The capital account was also underspent as a result of the fact that many of the Service's capital schemes had been hindered by difficulties in the procurement of materials. The deficit in the pension account would, as usual, be reimbursed by the Home Office.

**Resolved -** That the Management Accounts for the period ending 28 February 2022 be received.

### **SCRUTINY PROGRAMME**

**37/22 ANTI-BULLYING CAMPAIGN (PROGRESS UPDATE) -** The Executive Director of People and Development submitted a report in response to the scope within the Committee's Scrutiny Programme for 2021/22.

The Service was inspected by HMICFRS in 2018 and subsequently developed its Service Improvement Plan, incorporating areas for improvement identified both by the Strategic Leadership Team and HMICFRS. The Service had revised its policies and begun an anti-bullying campaign. The Dignity at Work Policy had been subject to consultation, agreed with the Fire Brigades Union, and implemented in October 2019. The Dignity at Work Policy defined bullying:

*"Bullying is characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient."*

This definition had been directly informed by that of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), which was used in Employment Tribunal cases. The Dignity at Work Policy had also been subject to consultation, agreed with the Fire Brigades Union, and implemented in October 2019. The Service had also procured and implemented the Employee Assistance Programme (Minute 94/20 refers), which included 24/7 support for staff members, and mandatory training to improve awareness with regard to bullying. Staff were also regularly reminded of the ways in which they could report bullying.

Formally reported incidents of bullying within the Service, while infrequent, were always treated seriously and investigated thoroughly. Mediation was usually offered by trained members of staff from the Service's Human Resources (HR) department in order to prevent the escalation of any problematic behaviours. Data relating to grievances and disciplinary matters were routinely uploaded to the Firewatch system, which also fed into the

Service's bespoke tracking software and monitored by HR. The data did not, at the time of the meeting, reveal any concerning patterns.

During its inspection of the Service in 2018, HMICFRS had conducted an open staff survey, which had been followed by another in August 2020, the summarised results of which had been appended to the report submitted to the Committee at its meeting on 5 July 2021. Since then, the Service had conducted a survey which indicated that the percentage of respondents who reported having felt bullied or harassed had reduced from 26 percent (of 246 respondents) in 2018/19 to 5.5 percent (of 54 respondents) in 2021. Allegations of bullying in the organisation were infrequent but had continued to be treated and investigated thoroughly. The Service sought to address most issues through mediation in order to intervene early and repair relationships before employees felt the need to pursue a formal grievance. The Committee asked how many trained mediators the Service had and heard that six had been trained in 2021, bringing the total number of operational mediators to 10.

The Committee asked why comments from relevant employee unions had not been included in the report. No comments had been received from the unions despite their having been given more than three weeks to respond. However, the Joint Consultative Committee had not expressed any concerns.

The Committee cited organisational culture issues in other emergency service organisations and asked how it could be assured that the Service's reported progress in relation to bullying and harassment were representative of the whole organisation and that employees felt able to report issues. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that he felt that the report accurately reflected the progress made by the Service as a result of significant changes to its management approach in the previous five years, using extensive training programmes to introduce supportive leadership and corporate decision-making. The Service had hosted leadership forums to focus on issues such as those faced by the London Metropolitan Police. The formation of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to introduce a formal process of accountability had also driven improvements locally and nationally.

**Resolved -** (a) That Committee take assurance from the progress made by the Service in relation to bullying and harassment, and

(b) that, due to the steady decline of staff reporting feeling bullied or harassed and with the organisational support in place, Human Resources and Occupational Health to continue to monitor and report alongside other normal employee relations performance reports.

**38/22 GAS COMMITTEE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 2022/23** - The Committee Manager submitted a report summarising the longlist of topics for the Committee's consideration as part of its Scrutiny Programme 2022/23.

**Resolved -** That a scrutiny programming workshop be held in May 2022 and the Committee's draft Scrutiny Programme be submitted to the meeting due to be held on 15 June 2022.

**39/22 ANY OTHER BUSINESS** - There was no other business.