

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY
GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 NOVEMBER 2021

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

Councillor Briggs and Councillor Green attended as observers.

Phil Shillito - Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Executive Director Service Delivery, Niall McKiniry - Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Jason Kirby - Temporary Director of People and Development, Paul McCourt - Director of Service Delivery, Simon Rhodes - Temporary Director of Service Improvement, Steve Topham - Director of Service Delivery Support, Martyn Ransom - Head of Finance, Lour Marritt - Apprenticeships and Learning & Development Manager, Ros Barbour - Communications Supervisor, Mathew Buckley - Monitoring Officer/Secretary, and Samm Campbell - Committee Manager were also present. Andy McCulloch - Internal Audit (TIAA) and Ross Woodley (Mazars) 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

87/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies for absence were received from Mrs P Jackson

88/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - There were no declarations of interest.

89/21 MINUTES - *Resolved* - That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 September 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

90/21 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES, OTHER THAN ON THE AGENDA -

Minute 84/21 - Promotion within Uniformed Roles - The Committee had been updated in accordance with its recommendations.

Minute 86/21 - Upcoming GAS Committee Vacancies - The three GAS Committee vacancies had been advertised and interviews were due to be conducted in December 2021.

GOVERNANCE

91/21 UPDATE: MATTERS ARISING/FEEDBACK FROM FIRE AUTHORITY - The Monitoring Officer/Secretary provided feedback on items considered by the Fire Authority at its meetings of 24 September and 22 October 2021.

Resolved - That the update be received.

Audit

92/21 INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE - Andy McCulloch (TIAA) presented a report updating the Committee on progress in relation to the internal audit process.

Since the Committee's previous meeting, three audit reports (Minute 79/21 refers) had been finalised: Shift Productivity; National Operational Guidance Phase 3 and 4; and

Grievance Arrangements. TIAA was on course to conclude its remaining audit activities in accordance with the plan presented in its report.

Resolved - That the update be received.

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

93/21 HMICFRS INSPECTION UPDATE - The Temporary Director of Service Improvement provided the Committee with a verbal update in relation to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service's (HMICFRS).

The first tranche of HMICFRS's second full round of inspections was due to be published in the coming weeks. These would be useful to the Service as it prepared for its own second inspection which was due to be undertaken across a six-week period starting on 13 December 2021. Details of the Inspectorate's survey of the Service's workforce would also be made available as part of the inspection process.

Resolved - That the update be received.

94/21 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS - PERIOD ENDING 30 SEPTEMBER 2021 - The Head of Finance presented the Management Accounts for the period ending 30 September 2021.

The Service projected a slight underspend of £298,000 by the end of the 2021/22 financial year. Delays in the progress of some of the ongoing capital schemes had meant that the Service was expected to spend £5.006m of capital funding by the end of the 2021/22 financial year compared to the planned £7.029m. As always, the Pension Fund Account deficit (£12.940m) was due to be settled by the Home Office.

A Member queried whether a new site had been identified for the ARK project. The business case was in the process of being reviewed by the University of Hull, and the projects location would be considered as part of the review.

Resolved - That the Management Accounts for the period ending 30 September 2021 be received.

95/21 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2021/22 - The Head of Finance presented a report summarising the Service's treasury management activities during the first half of the 2021/22 financial year.

By the end of September 2021, the Service had £15.5m in temporary investments. Low rates of return in recent months had made it increasingly difficult for the Service to invest its money in the short-term without negative interest rates. The Service had not borrowed any money so far during the 2021/22 financial year, but would continue to borrow at opportune moments.

Resolved - (a) that the report be received, and

(b) that an update session in relation to treasury management be scheduled for the Committee in April 2022.

96/21 CIPFA FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CODE RISK ASSESSMENT - The Head of Finance presented the Service's CIPFA Financial Management Code risk assessment.

The Service would need to be fully compliant with CIPFA's Financial Management Code by 1 April 2022, and its risk assessment showed that the Service would be fully compliant by the target date. However, the Service had sought some clarity from CIPFA in

relation to the requirement to use "...independent objective quantitative measures to assess the risks to financial sustainability", which, as a Member had noted, was not an entirely clear instruction.

Resolved - That the CIPFA Financial Management Code risk assessment be received.

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME

97/21 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NFCC CORE CODE OF ETHICS - The Temporary Director of People and Development submitted a report in response to the scope within the Committee's Scrutiny Programme for 2021/22.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) had developed its Core Code of Ethics (hereafter, 'the Code') in response to a recommendation of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The Code was launched nationally on 18 May 2021 alongside the more particular Core Code of Ethics Fire Standard (hereafter, 'the Fire Standard'), which was published by the Fire Standards Board (FSB). The Service had decided to proactively adopt and promote the Code.

The five ethical principles of the Code were:

- (i) **Putting our communities first** – we put the interest of the public, the community and service users first.
- (ii) **Integrity** – we act with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything we do.
- (iii) **Dignity and respect** - making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.
- (iv) **Leadership** – we are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexibility and resilient leadership. We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.
- (v) **Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)** – We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI both within the FRSs and the wider communities in which we serve. We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

And the Code set out employees' responsibilities in four distinct tiers:

- (i) **All Staff** – all staff should have an understanding of the Core code and maintain high standards of ethical behaviour within their working life.
- (ii) **Supervisory and middle managers** – additionally it is incumbent on supervisory and middle managers to understand the impact of the Core Code on their specific responsibilities.
- (iii) **Senior managers** – Senior managers within the FRS must have an in-depth understanding of the contents of the Core Code. Senior managers include corporate management board members, area managers, heads of departments and heads of service.
- (iv) **Fire Authority** – Those who govern FRSs will demonstrate their commitment to the Core Code by championing its use. This may include utilising the Core Code to inform FRS values and vision; monitoring and supporting its development and progress through effective scrutiny.

The Fire Standard used firmer language than the Code, stating that the Service *must*:

- (i) Adopt and embed the Core Code to demonstrate that the service is fully committed and compliant at both an individual and corporate level.
- (ii) Ensure the attitudes, professional behaviours and conduct described within the core code are reflected in its decision-making, policies, procedures, processes, and associated guidance that govern how the service manages and supports its workforce.
- (iii) Provide training and support to all those who work for, or on behalf of, a service to achieve their understanding of the Core Code and an appreciation of their responsibilities in adhering to it.
- (iv) Not detract from the Core Code.

And that the Service's leaders, and those who worked for, or on behalf of, the Service *must*:

- (v) Understand, respect, and follow the principles of the Core Code and demonstrate this by their commitment to it and their responsibility for upholding it.
- (vi) Conduct themselves in accordance with the Core Code.

While those responsible for the governance of the Service *must*:

- (vii) hold the Chief Fire Officer to account for the implementation of the Core Code at a local level;
- (viii) play a proactive role in challenging behaviour inconsistent with the Core Code; and
- (ix) ensure strategies, policies and performance measures are in place to promote and embed a positive and inclusive culture.

And that the Service *should*:

- (x) Designate a senior leader who is responsible for promoting the Core Code throughout the service and ensuring that all those who work for, or on behalf of, the service understand its contents and what is expected of them.

Prior to the implementation of the Code, an analysis of the Service's existing principles and behaviours documents had shown many similarities with the Code. During its first inspection of the Service in 2018, HMICFRS had concluded that the Service's principles and behaviours were well-embedded, which led the Service to feel confident about the implementation of the Code. The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) had identified the Deputy Chief Fire Officer as the lead officer for the implementation of the Code.

The Service had undertaken a Gap Analysis in relation to its compliance with the Fire Standard and the Code (a summary of which had been appended to the report), which would be used to develop an ongoing and detailed action plan that would be monitored by Strategic and Tactical Leadership Teams. The Service had developed a mandatory electronic-learning programme for staff members to ensure that they were aware of the Code's requirements. Interactive guides had also been prepared for managers within the service to support the roll-out of the electronic-learning and other campaign materials. The Service's talent pipeline process (Minute 84/21 refers) had also been adapted to incorporate the Code, with prospective managers required to deliver presentations on how it affected their conduct. As HMICFRS had observed previously, the preceding principles and behaviour documents were well-embedded among the Service's staff, which meant that replacing existing communications campaigns had been a natural and well-received process. During 2022, the

Service would launch its updated personal development review (PDR) process, which would also incorporate the Code.

A Member asked how confident the Service was that, having promoted it extensively across the workforce, the Code would have an effect on staff members' behaviour. The pipeline and PDR processes were the most important to the proper embedment of the Code. Through these processes, the Service would be able to ensure that individual members of staff both understood and abided by the Code. Other policies and processes would also contribute to the monitoring of the Code's implementation, including the grievance and disciplinary processes. The Service was also keen to ensure that staff members felt able to report potential breaches of the Code. While the Code itself did not include the means to address breaches, the Service's other policies would.

A Member queried whether the Chief Fire Officer would be ultimately accountable for the implementation of the Code, and was informed that he would be. The Fire Authority was updated with regard to the implementation of the code at its meeting of 25 June 2021, with further information provided at the Member Day held on 9 July 2021. The Committee was keen to see the Chief Fire Officer's role in the implementation of the Code displayed prominently and recommended, because of the summary nature of the point, that it be moved to the top of the Gap Analysis. The Committee also wanted to ensure that a regular reporting process was established to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the Code, and recommended that such reports be received by the Fire Authority every six months.

Resolved - (a) That the Committee be updated on the Service's progress on the implementation of the Core Code of Ethics in six months, including comparative data and feedback from staff;

(b) that the criterion relating to the Chief Fire Officer in the Gap Analysis for the implementation of the Code be moved to the top of the list of criteria, and

(c) that regular update reports detailing the Service's progress in implementing the Code, and the effectiveness of the Code, be submitted to the Fire Authority every six months.

98/21 GAS COMMITTEE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 2021/22 - The Committee Manager submitted a report summarising the Committee's Scrutiny Programme 2021/22.

Resolved - That the Programme be received.

99/21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS - EXTERNAL AUDIT - Ross Woodley (Mazars) explained to the Committee that Mazars had presented its completion report to the Fire Authority, having received the Pension Fund assurance. While this had been one of the earliest external audit reports signed off by Mazars in 2021, it had yet to issue its final opinion. The Committee would be updated at the meeting due to be held on 24 January 2022.