

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

**4 JULY 2022**

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

Councillors Briggs attended as an observer.

Niall McKiniry - Assistant Chief Fire Officer/Executive Director of Service Delivery, Christine Cooper - Executive Director of People and Development, Martyn Ransom - Joint Deputy Chief Finance Officer, Steve Duffield - Temporary Director of Prevention and Protection, Matthew Sutcliffe - Director of Service Improvement, Steve Topham - Director of Emergency Response, Shaun Edwards - Head of Finance, Lisa Nicholson - Monitoring Officer/Secretary, Sam Campbell - Committee Manager, and Rob Close – Committee Manager were also present. Ross Woodley - External Auditor (Mazars) attended remotely.

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

*The Monitoring Officer/Secretary took the chair for Minute 49/22.*

**PROCEDURAL**

**49/22 ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE - *Resolved*** - That Pam Jackson be appointed Chairperson of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee for this meeting only.

*Pam Jackson took the chair.*

**50/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** - Apologies for absence were received from Jim Doyle.

**51/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** - There were no declarations of interest.

**52/22 MINUTES - *Resolved*** – That, following Martyn Ransom’s addition to the attendance, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 June 2022 be confirmed as a correct record as amended .

**53/22 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES, OTHER THAN ON THE AGENDA** - There were no matters arising.

**GOVERNANCE**

**54/22 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 June 2022.

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

**55/22 Draft Annual Statement of Assurance 2021/22** - The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report summarising the draft Annual Statement of Assurance for 2021/22.

As set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, the Statement of Assurance provided assurance that matters were shown due regard for the expectations set out within the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and the Framework. Sound financial management was evident through a number of key processes. The Authority operated in accordance with CIPFA and SOLACE framework for corporate governance as detailed within the Annual Corporate Governance Statement. The Strategic Plan (SP) and the CRMP, annually reviewed with the Business Partnership Framework, considered necessary strategic objectives and took into account The National Framework.

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

## **AUDIT**

**56/22 External Audit Progress Update** - Ross Woodley (Mazars) presented a report updating the Committee on progress in relation to the external audit process.

Despite a number of challenges, HFA was one of the first authorities in the country to provide the 2021/22 financial statements. Mazars were approximately two thirds of the way through their audit which faced a minor challenge from equipment valuations which differed to previous assumptions following the appointment of a new valuer. A new leader for local audits, established through the Audit Reporting and Governance Authority (ARGA), was set to start work in September. Moreover, the National Audit Office (NAO) launched a new effectiveness tool for Audit and Assurance Committee to establish their effectiveness.

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

## **FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE**

**57/22 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22** - The Head of Finance submitted a report summarising the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2021/22.

The rate of return on the Authority's investments in 2021/22 had been lower than originally budgeted for due to lower interest rates than anticipated. No short term borrowing was undertaken within the course of 2021/22, however, taking advantage of lower interest rates, the Authority secured a favourable rate of long term borrowing. Generally, the Authority benefitted from a good amount of cash flow and a limited debt pressures.

The Committee was advised that, while there was no national threshold set limiting capital expenditure, the Authority operated within CIPFA's code on treasury management to ensure appropriate and responsible use of capital.

**Resolved -** That the report be received;

**58/22 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22 (UNAUDITED)** - The Head of Finance submitted unaudited Annual Statement of Accounts for 2021/22.

The Annual Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 were produced ahead of the deadline 31 July 2022. In addition, the Committee asked what officers felt would be a likely pay award. The Head of Finance explained that pay awards would be determined at a national level, thus, the authority's allocated budget was unlikely to have a material impact. Additionally, the figure referred to accounted for inflationary pressures not just staffing costs. When the budget was set in December 2021, a pay award of 2.5 per cent appeared reasonable, however the unforeseen level of inflation, resulting from a number of external factors, could not have been predicted. Therefore, the importance of sufficient reserves to accommodate for variations in expenditure was stressed.

**Resolved -** That unaudited Annual Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 be received.

### **SCRUTINY PROGRAMME**

**59/22 Fire Standards** - The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report summarising the Committee's draft Scrutiny Programme 2022/23.

Fire Standards (FS) were expected to be a feature of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection programme going forward. Currently, there were 11 FS issued, with more still out for consultation, for an intended total of 23. FS sought to act as a key component of continuous improvement within the sector and provide a common standard of service. So far, the biggest change resulting from FS was changes to Fire Control which were primarily issued in 2021/22. The greatest challenge going forward was provision of driver training courses which were now qualifications linked to ISO data. The Fire Standards Board published a toolkit with each FS to support implementation and subsequent reporting. While no compulsory or recommended timescale was issued for FS adoption, compliance was expected to be managed through each Fire and Rescue Service (FRS). The Authority delegated responsibility for maintaining compliance with FS to the relevant directorates.

In response to questions raised, the following points were noted:

- **Current Challenges** – There were concerns that the resources to develop staff to keep up with the Emergency Response Driving FS may cause considerable challenges, particularly with limited providers. The necessity to regularly refresh codes of ethics may also lead to continual resource demands. As more FS were issued, effective forward planning for budgets was an area of concern, therefore particular attention would be given to consultation responses to anticipate future changes.
- **Common Professional Standards** – Officers were comfortable with the professionalism of their practices and appreciated the expectation for a common standard of service throughout the country.
- **College of Fire** – It was anticipated that in the future a College of Fire, similar to the virtual College of Policing model, would subsume the FSB for a longer term operating model.
- **Monitoring Compliance** – More practical methods of monitoring compliance were expected as it was appreciated that imposing data driven targets could divert resource allocation for those harder to monitor functions. Ultimately, it was hoped that a more qualitative approach would be adopted as seen through HMICFRS.
- **Governance** – The Authority's governance arrangements were inspected with the results being available for public scrutiny. Generally, it was felt that the Authority had a robust governance process in place with significant improvements made since its last inspection.
- **HMICFRS Inspections** – FS were expected to inform HMI inspections but wouldn't be immediately applicable for every aspect of fire and rescue.

**Resolved** - That the Programme be approved with thanks to the Committee Manager.

**60/22 GAS COMMITTEE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 2022/23** - The Committee Manager submitted a report summarising the Committee's Scrutiny Programme 2021/22.

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