

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY
GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 FEBRUARY 2023

PRESENT: Independent Co-opted Members James Doyle (Chair) Chris Brown, Pam Jackson, and Kathryn Lavery.

Officers Present: Matthew Sutcliffe – Assistant Chief Fire Officer & Executive Director of Corporate Services, Steve Duffield – Area Manager Service Improvement, Jon Henderson – Area Manager of Prevention and Protection (in remote attendance), Jason Kirby – Area Manager of Emergency Response, Martyn Ransom – Joint Deputy Chief Finance Officer & Deputy S.151 Officer, Simon Rhodes - Head of Corporate Assurance, Gareth Naidoo – Senior Corporate Assurance Officer, Paul Spurr – Information Governance Officer Lisa Nicholson – Monitoring Officer/Secretary, , and Rob Close – Committee Manager.

Internal Audit (TiAA)

David Robinson – Audit Manager (TiAA)

Councillor Briggs was also in attendance.

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

PROCEDURAL

12/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – Apologies for absence were received from Gerry Wareham.

13/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – No declarations of interest were made with respect to any items on the agenda.

14/23 MINUTES – ***Resolved*** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

15/23 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES, OTHER THAN ON THE AGENDA – There were no matters arising.

GOVERNANCE

16/23 UPDATE: MATTERS ARISING/FEEDBACK FROM FIRE AUTHORITY – The Monitoring Officer/Secretary advised the Committee that the minutes of the 10 February 2023 meeting of Humberside Fire Authority would be circulated to them after publication.

Resolved - That the minutes of the 10 February 2023 meeting of the Humberside Fire Authority be circulated to the Members of the Committee via email.

AUDIT

17/23 DRAFT INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2023/24 – The Committee received a report of the internal auditors, TIAA. The Committee was given an overview of the draft internal audit plan for 2023/24 and advised of emerging themes that informed it.

It was clarified that the Service Absolutess Process was the system that monitored how Station and Watch Managers ensured effective management of facilities.

The days allocated for audit topics within the annual plan took into account time for significant testing and a tailored approach. Particular time was made available for newer topics which auditors were not familiar with. Ultimately, until field work commenced on the audits, completion timetables were only estimated.

Resolved – (a) That the Committee endorse the Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24;

(b) That the Committee endorse Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination as the first piece of Audit work for 2023/24.

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

18/23 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE STRATEGY 2023/24 – The Committee received a report of the Deputy Joint Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Section 151 Officer.

The Committee was advised that, as part of the Local Governance Act 2003 and its supporting regulations, the Authority was required to have regard to the CIPFA Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice to set, on an annual basis, a range of Prudential and Treasury Indicators for the forthcoming three years to ensure that its capital investment plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable. The prudential indicators reported on the Authority's capital plans, minimum revenue provision, the treasury management strategy, and an investment strategy.

Indicator One gave a summary of the Authority's previously agreed and forecasted capital expenditure plans until 2026/27. Indicator Two presented the Authority's Capital Financing Requirements through its borrowing need. Currently, the Authority was under borrowed and there was no expectation for this to change. The newest Prudential Indicator, Indicator Three, was the Liability Benchmark which estimated the Authority's measure for liability for the forthcoming three financial years. Indicator Four gave an expected level of investment from the Authority's current resources. Indicators Five and Six presented the operational boundary and authorised limit for external debt respectively for the Authority. Indicator Seven identified the trend in the cost of capital against the net revenue stream. The Authority's Capital Strategy ultimately focussed investment on refurbishment of current operational assets.

The level of capital expenditure project slippage was agreed at Humberside Fire Authority at its 2 December 2022 meeting. The main delays were seen in fleet replacements; Fleet management was a joint service with Humberside Police operated by a Joint Estate Manager beginning work in March.

Regular updates were received from the Link Group indicating interest rates. The contract for Link Group was to be renewed in the next calendar year.

There were no plans currently to directly audit the service of Hull City Council's administration of the Authority's treasury management function, however there was capacity to amend scopes of the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan to accommodate this if there was an appetite to in the future.

Resolved – (a) That the Treasury Management and Capital Expenditure Strategy 2023/24 be received;

(b) That an update be given by the Joint Estates Manager on fleet replacement during the next municipal year;

- (c) That new members of Committee be offered training on Link.

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME

19/23 SCRUTINY ITEM – GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR) COMPLIANCE – The Committee received a report of the Area Manager of Service Improvement.

The Committee was advised that, in May 2019, an audit of the Authority's management of data protection related matter was conducted by the East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC), to identify how well the Authority was complying with the GDPR legislation that came into force in May 2018.

The subsequent action plan identified areas of improvement and ultimately brought the authority into a position of compliance. As a result, the action plan transitioned to an Information Governance Compliance Assessment mirroring that of the Information Commissioner's Office Accountability Framework.

A recent internal audit review undertaken in November 2022 also demonstrated that the Authority had a robust data protection framework in place to continually monitor compliance against UK GDPR.

Members raised the following points:

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests – The fluctuation in receipt of FOI requests usually correlated with press coverage of public sector organisations. For example, significant receipt of FOIs was received during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Authority's current FOI figures were comparable with other Fire Authorities.

Data Protection eLearning – The Service had to ensure that all staff were trained in data protection every two years. Completion of this training was monitored on a quarterly basis and validity had consistently exceeded 95 per cent since February 2021. Due to the anniversary of the biennial refresh having just elapsed, staff validity had temporarily dropped to 87 per cent. The e-learning was mandatory for all staff, including all support staff (such as cleaners). Provision was made by managers for those staff (for example cleaners) that did not have access to Service ICT facilities to periodically undertake their e-learning requirements (such as Data Protection).

Data Protection Training for Elected Members – It was noted that the constituent authorities offered mandatory data protection training for HFA Members.

CCTV – The five areas on the Information Governance Compliance Assessment relating to CCTV were all in progress. Currently, appropriate signage was still outstanding, but this was likely to be erected within a matter of weeks.

Resolved – (a) That the Committee endorses the Authority's commitment to and compliance with UK GDPR;

(b) That a copy of the Data Protection Guide for Staff be circulated to the Committee for information upon publication.

20/23 GAS COMMITTEE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 2022/23 – The Committee Manager submitted a report summarising the Committee's Scrutiny Programme 2022/23.

Resolved – (a) That an item considering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Staff Forums be brought to the 3 April 2023 meeting of the Committee;

(b) That the Programme be received.

Following the meeting, the Chairperson of Humberside Fire Authority and the Chief Fire Officer offered the Authority's thanks to Mr James Doyle and Mrs Pam Jackson, for their continued hard work and service to the Committee and presented them with plaques.