

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY

FRIDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2023

PRESENT:

Members

Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:

Councillors Astell, Casson, Dennis, Meredith and Sutton

Representing Hull City Council:

Councillors Henry, Neal, North, Petrini and Woods

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Patrick, Shepherd and Swinburn

Representing North Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Briggs, Grant and Sherwood

Officers of Humberside Fire & Rescue Service

Phil Shillito - Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, Niall McKiniry - Deputy Chief Fire Officer & Executive Director of Service Delivery, Christine Cooper - Executive Director of People and Development, Kevin Wilson - Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer, Jason Kirby - Area Manager of Emergency Response, Steve Duffield - Area Manager of Service Improvement, Sam O'Connor – Head of Organisational Development, Lisa Nicholson - Monitoring Officer/Secretary and Alison Finn - Committee Manager.

External Audit:

Gavin Barker (Mazars)

The meeting was held at Service Headquarters, Hessle.

89/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Gill, Healing, Lindley, Matthews, Nolan, Waltham and Jonathan Evison.

90/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - No declarations

91/23 MINUTES - Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 21 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

92/23 MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Resolved - That the minutes of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4 September 2023 be received.

93/23 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS - there were no questions by Members.

94/23 COMMUNICATIONS -

- Humberside Fire and Rescue had been selected as 1 of 10 Fire and Rescue Services for a Thematic Inspection of Misconduct Handling by HMICFRS.
- TiAA had provided positive verbal feedback from their audit of staff development and had confirmed that processes were being followed well. A written report would be provided and brought to a future Fire Authority meeting.

95/23 EXTERNAL AUDIT COMPLETION REPORT - Mazars submitted their completion report for Humberside Fire and Rescue Service for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Subject to the satisfactory conclusion of remaining audit work, Mazars made the following conclusions:

- Mazars anticipate issuing an unqualified opinion, without modification, on the financial statements;
- Mazars anticipate having no significant weaknesses in arrangements to report in relation to the arrangements that the Authority had in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources, and
- Mazars had not yet received group instructions from the National Audit Office in respect of the Authority's WGA submission. They were therefore unable to commence that work until such instructions were received.

Mazars reported that their work was substantially complete and there were no matters, they were aware of, that would require modification of their audit opinion. The Pension Fund Audit was still in progress as assurance had not yet been received from the Pension Fund Auditor. The completion deadline had therefore slipped to 30 November 2023.

Mr Barker offered his thanks to Mr Wilson and his best wishes for his new job.

Resolved - That the update be received.

96/23 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS - The Executive Director of Finance submitted a report that provided Members with Annual Statement of Accounts for 2022/23.

The Statement of Accounts summarised the financial performance of the Authority for year ended 31 March 2023. Those accounts were prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). The purpose of the narrative report was to offer interested parties a fair, balanced and easily understandable guide to the most significant matters reported in the accounts.

Since 2011/12 the Authority had suffered a circa 40 per cent reduction in external funding which equated to approximately £11.5m. Despite those significant challenges the Authority continued to take a very prudent approach to its finances. To that end, £11.5m of efficiencies had been implemented over the years 2011 to 2019. Historically, the Authority had lived within its means and delivered a modest underspend in recent years. The 2022/23 financial year had seen the Authority deliver an underspend which signified good financial management given increased cost pressures in relation to annual pay awards and general inflationary increases in relation to commodities such as gas, electricity and fuel.

The Authority's position over the medium-term was sound but would be kept under continuous review particularly with regard to any cost pressures arising and also pay awards that may be agreed over the next 2 to 3 years against a backdrop of higher levels of general inflation and tight financial settlements from the Government.

Resolved - That the accounts be approved.

97/23 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS PERIOD ENDING 30 JUNE 2023 - The Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer submitted a report that provided Members with the Management Accounts for the period ending 30 June 2023.

The report highlighted the current financial position based on information to 30 June 2023. The summary estimated outturn position for the current financial year based on information to 30 June 2023 was as follows:

CATEGORY	2023/24 OUTTURN PROJECTION
HFA	

Revenue Budget	£0.295m underspend
Capital Programme	On budget against a £7.474m allocation
Pensions Account	£13.792m deficit

That was the first set of Management Accounts for the 2023/24 financial year and updates would be brought to the Authority based on the periods ending 30 September 2023, 31 December 2023 and 28 February 2024.

Resolved - That report be received and Members take assurance on the Authority's financial position for the period ending 30 June 2023.

98/23 FINANCIAL OUTLOOK 2023/24 Onwards - The Executive Director of Finance submitted a report that considered the Authority's financial prospects for the years 2024/25 to 2027/28. The report also provided an update on the rationale for a Prudent Minimum level of General Reserves.

The Authority had a strong track record in dealing with the significant challenges that austerity had brought since 2011 and had delivered £11m of efficiencies as a response to the £11m reduction in funding. That had involved early decision-making regarding efficiencies so that the impact on the Service could be kept to an absolute minimum.

The Authority's outturn for 2022/23 delivered an underspend of £448k and a closing level of total Revenue Reserves of £14.8m. The Authority had set a balanced budget for 2023/24 and the last budget monitoring to 30 June 2023 set out a £295k projected underspend. Pay awards in the current year had been agreed (with the exception of Green book staff), but every one per cent increase on the pay bill if applied to all staff (Grey, Green and Gold Book) equalled almost £400,000.

The current financial projection for 2024/25 to 2027/28 had been updated to reflect agreed pay awards for 2023/24 (with an amended assumption of six per cent for Green book staff) and the impact of those changes were shown in the table below.

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Surplus/(Deficit) (£k)	178	(763) *	(401)	47
Reserves (£m)	13.4	11.8	11.3	10.0
Precept Assumption	£4.99p	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%

*Includes additional £1.35m for system replacement costs

The Finance team were in the early stages of planning for 2024/25 and the local government settlement was expected mid-December. Reserves were held by the Authority to meet general financial risks and costs that may materialise (General Reserve) and to meet specific project costs or financial liabilities (Earmarked Reserves). The total level of reserves held by the Authority (£6 million) was in the 3rd quartile as a percentage of revenue budget (English Fire and Rescue Services).

Resolved - That the report be noted and that Members approve the Prudent Minimum level of General Reserves.

99/23 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 ONWARDS - VEHICLES, ESTATES AND ICT - The Area Manager of Emergency Response/Area Manager Prevention, Protection, Fleet and Estates submitted a report that requested Members approval for the proposed capital programme for Vehicles, Estates, and ICT for 2024/25 onwards.

In the last twelve months, the Service placed an order for five fire engines, those were accepted into the Service at the end of 2022, in keeping with the vehicle replacement programme. In addition, the Service was out to tender for a further five fire engines which would come into service by the end of 2024. A further five fire engines were budgeted for in each of the years 25/26 and 26/27. Annual condition reports continued to be undertaken and received for all vehicles in the fleet, and along with further analysis of each vehicle's usage, that was assisting in the review of the Services small vehicles. There was a commitment to reduce the fleet by 10 per cent and in fact a 14 per cent reduction had been achieved through the integrated efforts of all functions. Further investment into the infrastructure required to support an EV fleet would continue in support of the Environmental Plan, with the intention of replacing all small vehicles wherever possible. The

heavy vehicles capital had been increased by £0.8m to support the purchase of a 45 metre Aerial. That figure included £0.21m which was allocated to the replacement Water Support Unit, and slipped from 2021/22, as that vehicle was still in good order. The Water Support Unit would now be replaced in 2027/28.

In 24/25 there was a planned £300k spend on replacement boats and £236k spend on replacement radiation equipment. The proposed Vehicles/Equipment Programme for 2023/24 onwards was therefore as follows:

	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £
Heavy Vehicles	1.990m	0.980m	1.500m	1.600m	0.49m
Light Vehicles	0.624m	0.156m	0.650m	0.210m	0.508m
Equipment	0.363m	0.8m	0.242m	0.540m	0.3m
Total	2.977m	1.936m	2.392m	2.350m	1.298m

Again, as detailed and approved last year, the block allocation for Estates was uplifted by £50k annually to reflect the increased costs of programme delivery in terms of materials and other supply chain inflation. Further work was underway to determine future years' priorities, including any further works identified by condition reporting. The proposed Estates programme was therefore as follows:

Scheme	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £
Goole	675k			
Preston & Partington	60k			
Winterton	433k	216k		
Immingham East	328k	219k		
HQ	130k			
Training Infrastructure	108K	100k		
Electric vehicle charging points	60k	60k	40k	40k
Fire station external works	100k			
Bridlington Doors	150k			
Cromwell Road		431k		
Pocklington		150k		
Driffield		202k		
Crowle		200k		
Withernsea		50k		
Block Allocation			750k	750k
Total	2.044m	1.628m	790k	790k

Several business applications were approaching the end of their useful life and needed to be replaced to support different ways of working, which would enable better efficiency. The ICT Capital Programme continued to set out and plan for software replacements in the life of the ICT Capital Programme with funding assigned to cover that cost. The proposed ICT capital programme was therefore as follows:

	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £
Core ICT Replacement Programme	200k	300k	200k	200k
Data Centre Hardware Upgrade	150k	150k	100k	100k

Total	350k	450k	300k	300k
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Resolved - That the Capital Programme 2024/25 onwards for Vehicles, Estates and ICT be approved.

100/23 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 - The Head of Organisational Development submitted a report that provided Members with an annual update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for 2022/23.

The Service reviewed the original Public Sector Equality Duty Priorities during 2020-2021 by extensive consultation with staff and communities. The 5 Public Sector Equality Duty Priorities had been progressed over three years to align with the Community Risk Management Plan 2021-2024.

Service 5 Public Sector Equality Duty Priorities

1. Leading by example on equality
2. Increasing diversity throughout our workforce
3. Ensuring a safe and fair workplace for all staff
4. Continuing to improve our knowledge of our diverse communities and how we engage with them
5. Identifying the fire and other emergency risks linked to multiple disadvantage and discrimination

2023-2024 would be the fourth and last year the existing priorities would be implemented to achieve outcomes for communities and employees. The Service would then be consulting with a wide range of stakeholders to refresh the objectives.

Resolved - That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2022/23 be approved.

101/23 BULLYING, HARASSMENT & DISCRIMINATION - INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2023/24 – The Area Manager of Service Improvement provided Members with a report by Internal Audit on Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination.

The Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination audit was conducted from 21 to 28 July 2023 by TIAA. The overarching scope of the audit considered actions taken to minimise instances of bullying, harassment and discrimination and promotion of the No Tolerance campaign.

The internal audit methodology consisted of desktop reviews of associated documentation, analysis of monitoring and recording methods, sample testing, staff interviews, introduction and exit meetings.

The Service received an overall assessment rating of Reasonable Assurance with three recommendations identified, and the Service had now completed each of the action point recommendations, which would be subject to a mid-year follow as part of the internal audit plan 2023/24.

Resolved - That report be received and Members note:

- (i) the Service has adhered to the Annual Internal Plan through the completion of the Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination internal audit, receiving a rating of Reasonable Assurance.
- (ii) each of the action point recommendations have been addressed and completed.
- (iii) the outcomes from the internal audit will be used to inform further learning and supportive evidence for His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), values and culture report.
- (iv) TIAA will quality assure the Service completion of the action point recommendations in their scheduled mid-year follow up audit.

102/23 REAL WORLD HR - SERVICE IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY - The Executive Director of People and Development provided Members with a report on Real World HR.

In April 2023, the Service commenced a tendering exercise to appoint a suitable supplier to carry out independent staff engagement in relation to values and culture within the Service. Following a competitive

process, Real World HR was appointed. The engagement process, with staff across the Service, included a staff survey, several focus groups and action plan outcomes for the Service. The completed report would be received in November 2023 and outcomes would be reported to Members.

Resolved - That that the Fire Authority

- (i) Endorses the approach taken to ensuring the values and culture of the Service are understood and improved, and
- (ii) Receives timely updates on the project and the associated outcomes of the report.

103/23 HMICFRS INSPECTION UPDATE AND UPDATE ON VALUES AND CULTURE IN FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES – The Area Manager of Service Improvement provided Members with a report on Inspection Updates and an update on Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services.

The report provided an update on recent correspondence from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), regarding their programme of inspections, across 2023 and 2024, for Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS).

On 13 July 2023 the Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to carry out a thematic inspection of the handling of misconduct allegations in fire and rescue services in England. On 26 July 2023 confirmation was received that the Service would be one of ten services selected for the thematic inspection. The ten services selected were to ensure evidence was gathered from large and small, and rural and urban services. They also covered different governance models that operate throughout England and were selected to avoid overlap with scheduled service inspections.

It was also timely to update Members of the Service's response to recommendations made by HMICFRS in its spotlight report 'Values and culture in fire and rescue services', reported to the Authority in June 2023 and the CFO subsequently gave a verbal update of progress at the meeting of the Authority in July 2023. The Action Plan, for actions with direct CFO accountability, continued to progress through a cross representative Culture Working Group to ensure our compliance with recommendations.

On 31 July 2023 HMICFRS updated services on progress with round three service inspections, including dates. Dates for HFRS inspection, initially anticipated to commence in the first quarter of 2024, had been confirmed to now start 1 July 2024 with the inspection processes concluding in October 2024.

Preparation for both the thematic and service wide inspections were underway, engagement with HMICFRS was managed through the Service Improvement Directorate. Updates would be provided for Members at future meetings.

Resolved - That the Fire Authority takes assurance from the pro-active actions taken and receives further updates periodically.

104/23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND S.151 OFFICER - The Chairperson provided an update on the outcome of the Appointments Committee held on 21 September 2023.

The Appointments Committee determined that Martyn Ransom be appointed as Executive Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer and made such a recommendation to the Fire Authority.

Resolved - That Martyn Ransom be appointed as Executive Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer.

105/23 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER UPDATE - The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive provided a verbal update.

- The release of the anticipated Government White Paper – Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service - was still awaited and no date has been provided when it might be published,
- The Chief Fire Officer offered his congratulations to Martyn Ransom on his appointment to Executive Director of Finance and welcomed him to the Senior Leadership Team,
- The Chief Fire Officer expressed his appreciation of Kevin Wilson, the outgoing Executive Director of Finance, for his hard work and dedication to the Fire Service over the last 16 years, and
- The Chairperson also expressed his thanks to Kevin Wilson for his hard work and stressed that his professionalism had been appreciated and valued by the Authority.

Resolved - That the update be noted.