

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY

FRIDAY, 21 JULY 2023

PRESENT:

Members

Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:

Councillors Astell, Casson, Dennis, Gill, Meredith, Nolan and Sutton

Representing Hull City Council:

Councillors Henry, Matthews, Neal, North, and Woods

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Lindley, Patrick, Shepherd and Swinburn

Representing North Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Briggs, Grant, Sherwood and Waltham MBE

Officers of Humberside Fire & Rescue Service

Phil Shillito - Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, Kevin Wilson - Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer, Jon Henderson - Area Manager Prevention, Protection, Fleet and Estates, Jason Kirby - Area Manager of Emergency Response, Steve Duffield - Area Manager of Service Improvement, Emma Appleton - Acting Monitoring Officer/Secretary and Rob Close - Committee Manager.

Also in attendance: Andy Blades (HMICFRS).

The meeting was held at Service Headquarters, Hessle.

77/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Healing, Councillor Petrini, and Jonathan Evison.

78/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Councillor Gill declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 86/23 as she had supported the Fire Fighters' Charity by hosting an event.

79/23 MINUTES - Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 23 June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

80/23 MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Resolved - That the minutes of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 July 2023 be received.

81/23 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS - there were no questions by Members.

82/23 COMMUNICATIONS - none.

83/23 TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT - The Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer submitted a report that provided Members with a review of the Authority's treasury management activity and Prudential Indicators for the year 2022/23.

The Authority's temporary investments totalled £9.0m as at 31 March 2023.

Table 1 – Investment income earned 2022/23

Interest Earned 2022/23	Rate of return 2022/23	Benchmark return 2022/23*	Difference
£335,446	3.36%	4.18%	(0.82%)

* Benchmark set as average SONIA rate for the year

Interest earned during 2022/23 was £295k higher than originally budgeted for in respect of investment activity for the year, due to higher interest rates than originally anticipated.

The Authority sought to minimise the use of short-term borrowing to fund temporary cash shortfalls. The Authority did not undertake any short-term borrowing during the year. Long-term loans were taken out either to replace existing loans which had matured or to fund capital expenditure. The Authority's average level of borrowing was £18.8m for 2022/23, on which £608k of interest was payable. The Authority repaid £900k of Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) debt upon maturity whilst taking no new borrowings during the year. Closing PWLB debt at 31 March 2023 was £18.2m.

It was explained that the Authority's investment strategy, set prior to the current financial year, identified more secure counter parts to invest in, thus, a lower investment yield was returned. The Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer advised that a cautious approach was prudent in the current economic climate.

There was some scope to release money from reserves to pay for short term capital projects however, for longer term more costly projects, external borrowing was still seen as the appropriate financing option.

Members took assurance from the treasury management activities undertaken during 2022/23 and the Prudential Indicators as outlined in the report.

Resolved - That the Treasury Management Annual Report 2022/23 be approved.

84/23 ROLE OF MEMBER CHAMPIONS - The Area Manager of Service Improvement submitted a report summarising the role of Member Champions.

The role of Member Champion and the allocation of individual Members to specific roles was first introduced by the Fire Authority in October 2017. Since then, the role of Member Champion had developed over time. Members, except for the Chairperson of the Authority, were each assigned a Member Champion role at the Annual General Meeting of the Authority. The report set out the Member Champion roles assigned, in consultation with Group Secretaries, to individual Members following the Annual General Meeting.

The relevant Area Manager or Executive Director hold quarterly meetings with their respective Member Champions to provide an overview of current and future operational activity (including performance metrics where appropriate) and to consider current and arising issues. It was acknowledged that Members must balance several commitments and responsibilities in their role as elected Member and therefore had only a finite amount of time they could dedicate to their Fire Authority duties. As such, it was proposed that Member Champion meetings only take place on a quarterly basis virtually, either by Microsoft Teams or Zoom, with meetings set to last no longer than one hour.

Whilst the role of a Member Champion was a nominated position it was recognised by the Service that Members would want to forge a relationship more locally within their respective constituent area. Therefore, the District Manager in the respective unitary authority area would also host a specific meeting on a quarterly basis to run through local matters. All Fire Authority Members from the relevant District would be invited and encouraged to attend those district meetings.

Resolved - That the Fire Authority -

- (i) Reiterates its support for and engagement in the role of Member Champions;
- (ii) Approves the Member Champions Terms of Reference, and

(iii) Approves the Terms of Reference for District Meetings.

85/23 AERIAL APPLIANCE REPLACEMENT - The Area Manager of Emergency Response submitted a report summarising the review of the Service's Aerial capability.

The aerial appliance at Scunthorpe Station was due for replacement in 2026/27. Due to the age of the appliance, the Service had experienced reliability issues and repair /maintenance complications. To ensure continued provision of the capability, the Service had an older 32m aerial appliance on hire. The reliability issues and approaching replacement date for the appliance prompted a review of the Service's Aerial capability.

A detailed review was undertaken by the Emergency Preparedness and Fleet & Equipment Team. The review was considered by the Executive Board and a decision made to bring the replacement of the appliance forward into this financial year and delay the replacement of the Water Support Unit until 2026/27. A concise version of the review was provided through the report for members information and assurance.

The appliance chassis were standard designs imported from abroad before bespoke bodies were made to order. While there was an ambition to pursue the green agenda and develop an electric fleet, the Authority did not expect aerial appliances to imminently move from diesel to electric. Upon the need for disposal, the aerial appliance was returned to the supplier for a small capital return of £13,000.

As the length of the ladder increased, the base of the appliance footprint also increased which led to a compromise in length to 45 metres to retain effective movability through narrower streets. 45 metres was still seen as effective for aerial appliances when considered against the high rise building profile in the Service area.

Resolved - That report be received.

86/23 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER UPDATE - The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive provided a verbal update.

- The Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service White Paper had not been published prior to Parliamentary recess, however the Authority would continue its work with the Fire Brigades Union in relation to matters that may be raised in the White Paper.
- A fire engine previously in the Authorities fleet, valued at £4,000, had been donated to North Lindsey College after it reached the end of its lifecycle, to be used by students studying mechanical engineering.
- Following the notice of resignation of the Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer, an advertisement for the role had now gone live.
- The Authority received a letter from HMICFRS on issues of misconduct, as did all other Fire and Rescue Services. Ten Services are being selected for inspection but no notification had been received regarding who the ten were at this stage.
- An officer of the Authority sat on the National Fire Chiefs Council Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Contaminants project board offering significant insights as the Authority budgeted for PPE.
- A letter was received by the Authority from a representative of Women in the Fire Service UK, thanking the Authority for the extensive support provided.
- The Fire Fighters' Charity confirmed that the Service raised the significant amount of £71,000 in the previous year. The lead officer for the charity GM Richard Gibson will be invited to the September authority meeting so that members can acknowledge the work undertaken.
- A range of internal services and external organisation were available to staff to raise concerns about the Authority's practices or individual members of staff. Members took assurance in the Service's commitment to good practice and employee health and wellbeing.

Resolved - That the update be noted.

87/23 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS/PUBLIC - Resolved - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 & 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

In making its decision the Authority confirmed that having regard to all the circumstances it was satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

88/23 CONTROL 25 PROJECT – The Area Manager of Emergency Response submitted a report updating Members on the critical function of Fire Control.

Resolved - That the report be received.