

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY

FRIDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2023

PRESENT:

Members

Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:

Councillors Astell, Casson, Gill, Meredith and Sutton

Representing Hull City Council:

Councillors Henry, Petrini and Woods

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Lindley, Patrick and Shepherd

Representing North Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Briggs, Grant and Sherwood

Officers of Humberside Fire & Rescue Service

Phil Shillito - Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, Matthew Sutcliffe - Assistant Chief Fire Officer & Executive Director of Corporate Services, Christine Cooper - Executive Director of People and Development, Martyn Ransom - Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer, Jon Henderson - Area Manager of Prevention, Protection, Fleet and Estates, Jason Kirby - Area Manager of Emergency Response, Steve Duffield - Area Manager of Service Improvement, Lisa Nicholson - Monitoring Officer/Secretary and Alison Finn - Committee Manager.

The meeting was held at Service Headquarters, Hessle.

122/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Dennis, Healing, Matthews, Neal, Nolan, North, Swinburn, Waltham MBE and Jonathan Evison.

123/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - There were no declarations.

124/23 MINUTES - Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 3 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

125/23 MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Resolved - That the minutes of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 November 2023 be received.

126/23 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS - there were no questions by Members.

127/23 COMMUNICATIONS – Fire Authority Members were reminded that there was a reverse parking policy in place at Headquarters.

128/23 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT - The Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer submitted a report that provided Members with the Authority's treasury management activities for the first half of the financial year 2023/24.

The Authority's temporary investments totalled £21.6m as at 30 September 2023.

Table 1 – Investment income earned April to September 2023

Interest Earned April to September 2023	Rate of return April to September 2023	Benchmark return at 30 September 2023*	Difference (Favourable) April to September 2023
£242k	4.76%	4.74%	(0.02%)

* Benchmark set as average SONIA (Sterling OverNight Index Average)

The Authority had not taken any short-term borrowing in the first six months of the year. The Authority was unlikely to undertake short-term borrowing in the second half of the financial year.

The Authority’s level of borrowing was £17.2m as at 30 September 2023, with an equated average rate of interest payable at 3.13 per cent. An expected £545k of interest was projected to be payable on external debt for 2023/24. The Authority had not undertaken any new long-term borrowing so far this financial year but that position would be reviewed in the second half of the financial year against the backdrop of interest rate changes and projections.

The S.151 Officer considered the current capital programme to be affordable and sustainable with the revenue effects of capital investment built into the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Through the Medium-Term Financial Planning Process the Authority had ensured alignment of its capital resources to key strategic priorities.

The Authority’s approach to investment of surplus funds was designed to further mitigate against potential losses because of counterparty failure and reflected a prudent approach to treasury management activity.

Resolved - That the report be received.

129/23 DRAFT MEDIUM-TERM RECOURCE STRATEGY 2024/25 – 2027/28 – The Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer submitted a report that provided Members with the Authority’s Medium-Term Resource Strategy (MTRS) for the years 2024/25 to 2028/29 and provided details of the Authority’s 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.

The current MTRS contained the following assumptions:

Current Assumptions for 2024/25

Pay	4%
Precept	£4.99
Grant	5.5%
Non-pay savings target	3%

The current MTRS showed that a predicted deficit was expected over the next four years, that was likely to require the use of £2.6m from reserves over this period, before returning to a surplus in 2028/29.

	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	Total £'000
(Surplus)/Deficit (to)/from Reserves	483	1,217	643	248	(208)	2,383

Revenue Support grant income would be amended once the settlement was received from Government, that was expected in mid-December.

The total level of reserves held by the Authority was in the 3rd quartile as a percentage of revenue budget (English Fire and Rescue Services).

Resolved - That the update be received.

130/23 EXTENSION OF STRATEGIC PLAN AND CRMP 2021-24 - The Area Manager of Service Improvement submitted a report that asked for Members approval to extend the period of the Strategic Plan and CRMP to the end of the 2024 calendar year.

To provide stability and consistency in 2024, which was also a HMICFRS Inspection year, it was proposed that the current Strategic Plan and CRMP would remain in place after 1 April 2024, and potentially up to the end of that calendar year.

It was intended to maintain the current Strategic Plan and CRMP during 2024, in conjunction with preparing new 2024/27 plans, for consultation and publication.

- During calendar year 2024 it was not intended to change current Strategic Objective Statements within the Strategic Plan, they still aligned to the strategic direction of the Service pending any external influences. The underpinning Outcome Expectations and Outcome Measures would however be subjected to internal consultation and review to ensure they continued to reflect the expectations of employees.
- Revisions would be made to the CRMP during 2024, to ensure current and predictable risks and mitigations were documented, and to improve accessibility.
- In conjunction, work would be undertaken to produce a new Strategic Plan and CRMP for the period 2024/27, during 2024. That work would take account of any external influences arising from the anticipated publication of the Government White Paper, subsequent revision of the National Framework, potential outcomes from a General Election, any progression of devolution discussions, as well as community feedback because of consultations.

Resolved - That report be approved.

131/23 WORKFORCE PLANNING (APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2023) - The Executive Director of People and Development submitted a report that updated Members on workforce planning undertaken between April and September 2023.

In March 2023 the Service Workforce Plan was updated reflecting current staffing levels and the retirement profile. It also reflected how the Service met its obligations under the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and optimised the use of the 24-hour shift system.

A Workforce Planning meeting was held every quarter attended by all Heads of Function to review local planned and unplanned attrition rates and local context and developments. The Tactical Leadership Team met on a monthly basis and, if necessary, was also able to consider workforce planning matters which were occurring dynamically and ensure timely response to addressing shortfalls and redistributing resources, should that be necessary.

Progress over 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 included:

- 17 temporary On-Call to Full Time Firefighting contracts issued whilst further permanent recruitment activity took place.
- 13 new Full Time Probationer Firefighters (externally recruited) included 3 female recruits posted to station in July 2023.
- 3 external Full Time Firefighters transferring into the Service from 1st April 2023.
- 16 new Full Time Probationer Firefighters (externally recruited) included 4 female recruits beginning their training course from September 2023.

- Ongoing positive action initiatives to collect electronic expressions of interest enabling HFRS to target applications from all under-represented groups.
- Positive action 'roadshows' around Hull, East Riding, North Lincolnshire and North-East Lincolnshire Council areas ahead of the latest Full Time Firefighter recruitment drive.
- The implementation of further positive action programmes (Rookie Reds) to equip female applicants to undertake the selection process with more confidence.
- Use of the expressions of interest data to target individuals regarding the option to apply to become an On-Call Firefighter in rural areas where it was more geographically challenging to recruit in accordance with the five-minute response time.
- Recruitment and Promotion Processes during 2023 include:
 - Executive Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer Process – Advertised July 2023 – 1 appointed.
 - Group Manager (GM) Pipeline – Advertised February 2023 - 2 appointed.
 - Station Manager (SM) Pipeline – Advertised February 2023 – 3 appointed.
 - Watch Manager (WM) Pipeline – Advertised March 2023 – 9 appointed.
 - Crew Manager (CM) Pipeline – Advertised April 2023 – 12 appointed.

Resolved - That report be received.

132/23 REAL WORLD HR AND VALUES AND CULTURE IN FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES UPDATE -

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Executive Director of People and Development provided a verbal update on Real World HR and Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services.

The draft Real World HR Report had now been received, with the Service scheduled to meet with Real World HR later in the month to discuss the report in greater detail and plan the next steps. The intention was to share the report and resulting action plan at the next meeting of the Authority.

The Service continued to make good progress against the HMICFRS Values and Culture Report recommendations. Work continued to progress the remaining recommendations, most of which required a resolution at a national level.

Resolved - That update be noted.

133/23 BULLYING AND HARASSMENT INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT - The Executive Director of People and Development submitted a report that updated Members on the findings of Internal Audit.

The internal audit conducted by TIAA gave an overall assessment of 'reasonable assurance', the second highest level of assurance during an audit and identified areas of good practice in relation to regular communication on the Zero Tolerance campaign being reinforced through the staff magazine/bulletin, which was published every fortnight.

Key strategic findings included:

- Staff inductions and regular briefings from the Chief Fire Officer covered the Service's position on bullying, harassment and discrimination. There was also a designated contact/ Freedom to Speak Up Guardian.
- Complaints relating to bullying, harassment and discrimination were recorded centrally for monitoring purposes and were maintained by the Human Resources Team.
- All employees were required to complete mandatory training on bullying, harassment, and discrimination. Testing showed 95.3 per cent of employees had completed that to date.

Resolved - That report be received.

134/23 RESPONSE TO HMICFRS ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND – The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive submitted a report that updated Members on the state of Fire and Rescue Services in England as per His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). Members were asked to consider and approve a draft response to the 10 questions asked by HMICFRS.

Every year HMICFRS published a state of fire report which was an annual assessment of all Fire and Rescue Services in England. The report was based upon the inspections carried out since the previous State of Fire reporting timeframe.

In compiling the report, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Andy Cooke QPM DL wrote to authorities across England, to contribute to the report, which he did so to the Chair of the Fire Authority on 15 November 2023.

With a response date required of 1 December, a draft response to the 10 questions asked by HMICFRS was provided for Members consideration and approval.

Resolved - That the response be approved.

135/23 APPEALS COMMITTEE UPDATE – The Executive Director of People and Development gave a verbal update to Members on the Appeals Committee.

One Appeal Committee had been held this quarter, in October 2023.

Resolved - That update be noted.

136/23 HMICFRS UPDATE – The Assistant Chief Fire Officer/Executive Director of Corporate Services gave a verbal update to Members on the recent thematic inspection by HMICFRS into the handling of misconduct across Fire and Rescue Services.

The three-week HMICFRS thematic inspection into the handling of misconduct had now concluded and feedback had been provided to the Service by way of a hot debrief on Monday 27 November 2023.

Over the course of the three weeks (6 to 24 November) the inspectors spoke to 140 staff, conducted nine interviews and eight focus group sessions, undertook 10 reality testing sessions, visited five Fire Stations and undertook numerous casefile reviews and desktop exercises.

As this was a thematic inspection of just 10 selected fire and rescue services out of the 44 across England, there would be no individual formal grading for the Service. The generic findings from the 10 fire and rescue services' inspections would be published in a report (due June 2024) by HMICFRS.

There were a number of highlights reported by the inspectors following the inspection of the Service, namely:

- The Service has widely promoted the CCoE and found staff were aware of the behaviours expected of them.
- Staff spoke positively about the support of the HR Service Partners and their role in supporting discipline and grievance cases.
- The Service had a range of reporting lines and many staff are aware of these.
- The Service had accessible grievance and discipline processes with clearly defined timescales.
- The Service reviewed cases of discipline and grievance at HR quarterly meetings to understand any trends.
- RealWorldHR were developing recommendations with actions to support the Service to address any micro-cultures of poor behaviours.

Inspectors had also identified some areas for improvement, some of which related staff not feeling confident to challenge and report negative behaviours. The resulting work and action plan from the RealWorldHR report would look to address these issues.

The inspectors also highlighted the following promising or innovative practices:

- There was an external Service scrutiny through the role of the GAS Committee, in particular in its recent scrutinising the grievance process.
- the independence of Authority's Appeals Committee was to be commended.
- The Service had invested in RealWorldHR to undertake an independent review and oversight of the Service's culture and behaviours.
- There was a fast track process for disciplinary cases.

A lot of positives had been seen across the inspection and thanks were expressed to the Corporate Assurance section for their help in facilitating the inspection.

Resolved - That update be noted.

137/23 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER UPDATE - The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive provided a verbal update.

- The Chief Fire Officer and the Chairperson of the Authority had written to MPs and Ministers to seek their support for Fire and Rescue Services to be able to increase the Council Tax precept by £4.99 from April 2024. The letters had been acknowledged and the decision should be announced before Christmas.
- Two local devolution deals had been announced in the Autumn Statement for Hull and East Yorkshire and for Greater Lincolnshire. Meetings were being held with all the four constituent Local Authorities to consider the implications of the deals and any subsequent impact on the Service.
- The annual Staff Recognition Awards evening on 10 November had been well attended and well received. Thanks were expressed to Lauren Boswell, Events and Publicity Officer and the team for organising the event.
- All local Remembrance Day events had been well attended.
- Several white ribbon events had been attended over the last week.
- The latest fulltime trainees would graduate on 8 December 2023 with a Passing Out Parade.
- Three trainee firefighters had recently been dismissed from the Service for inappropriate behaviour and failing to uphold our Core Code of Ethics.
- Agreement had been reached between the FBU and Service on changes to the duty shift system and shifts. This had resulted in the continuation of consecutive shifts (24 hours) with block leave but with the day shift shall now starting at 07:30 and finishing at 16:30 (9 hours) and the night shift starting at 16:30 and finishing at 07:30 the following day (15 hours). Consultation on the relevant Policies and Policy Delivery Guidance would now commence.
- Members were informed of a recent serious fire at a property on Terry Street, Hull where three fire engines from Hull had been in attendance.

Resolved - That the update be noted.

138/23 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 paragraph 3 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.

139/23 CAPITAL INVESTMENT TO ENHANCE FIREFIGHTER SAFETY AND TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS - The Executive Director of People and Development submitted a report that updated Members on capital investment to enhance firefighter safety and training.

Resolved - That the short, medium, and long-term investment and developments for inclusion in the capital programme, as set out in the report, be approved.

140/23 CONTROL SOFTWARE UPDATE - The Area Manager of Emergency Response submitted a report that updated Members on Control Software.

Resolved - That report be received.