

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY

FRIDAY, 20 September 2024

PRESENT:

Members

Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:

Councillors Casson, Dennis, Gill, Heslop - Mullens, Meredith, Sutton and Whyte

Representing Hull City Council:

Councillors Beeson, Henry, McMurray, Neal and North

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Patrick and Shepherd

Representing North Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Grant, Ogg and Sherwood

Officers of Humberside Fire & Rescue Service

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, Lisa Nicholson - Monitoring Officer/Secretary and Alison Finn - Committee Manager.

The meeting was held at Service Headquarters, Hessle.

82/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies for absence were submitted from Jonathan Evison (Police and Crime Commissioner) and Councillors Bonner, Bridges, Lindley, Pickering and Waltham MBE.

83/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - There were no declarations of interest.

84/24 MINUTES - Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 19 July 2024 be approved as a correct record.

85/24 MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Resolved - That the minutes of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 July 2024 be received.

86/24 MINUTES OF THE PENSION BOARD - Resolved - That the minutes of Pension Board held on 8 July 2024 be received.

87/24 MINUTES OF THE APPEAL COMMITTEE - Resolved - That the minutes of the Appeal Committee held on 5 April 2024 be received.

88/24 MINUTES OF THE APPEAL COMMITTEE - Resolved - That the minutes of the Appeal Committee held on 9 August 2024 be received.

89/24 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS - there were no questions by Members.

90/24 COMMUNICATIONS - The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised Members that:

- i. Jason Kirby, Area Manager of Emergency Response, would be leaving the Service from 1 October 2024 to undertake a one year secondment as Assistant Chief Fire Officer of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service;
- ii. Jon Henderson, Area Manager of Prevention, Protection, Fleet and Estates, would be leaving the Service from early November to take up the position of Assistant Chief Fire Officer of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

As a consequence, Steve Duffield, currently Area Manager of Service Improvement would take over responsibility as Area Manager of Emergency Response. Dom Purchon would take up the position of Area Manager of Prevention, Protection, Fleet and Estate on a 12 month temporary basis and Mike Anthony would take up the position of Area Manager of Service Improvement on a 12 month basis too. Members expressed their thanks and congratulations to Jason and Jon and wished them every success in their new roles.

91/24 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS PERIOD ENDING 30 JUNE 2024 - The Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer submitted the unaudited Statement of Accounts for the period ending 30 June 2024.

The report highlighted the current financial position based on information to 30 June 2024. The summary estimated outturn position for the current financial year based on information to 30 June 2024 was as follows:

CATEGORY	2024/25 OUTTURN PROJECTION
HFA	
Revenue Budget	£0.299m underspend
Capital Programme	On budget against a £10.921m allocation
Pensions Account	£16.404m deficit

That was the first set of Management Accounts for the 2024/25 financial year and updates would be brought to the Authority based on the periods ending 30 September 2024, 31 December 2024 and 28 February 2025.

Resolved - That the report be received and Members take assurance on the Authority's financial position for the period ending 30 June 2024.

92/24 FINANCIAL OUTLOOK 2024/25 ONWARDS - The Executive Director of Finance submitted a report that considered the Authority's financial prospects for the years 2025/26 to 2029/30. The report also provided an update on the rationale for a Prudent Minimum level of General Reserves.

The Authority's outturn for 2023/24 delivered an underspend of £277k and a closing level of total Revenue Reserves of £15.1m.

The Authority had set a balanced budget for 2024/25 and the last budget monitoring to 30 June 2024 set out a £299k projected underspend.

Pay awards in the current year had been agreed (with the exception of Green book staff).

The current financial projections for 2025/26 to 2029/30 had been updated to reflect agreed pay awards for 2024/25 (with an amended assumption of 6 per cent for Green book staff) and the impact of these changes were shown in the table below:

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Surplus/(Deficit) (£k)	(580)	(1,024)	(199)	18	69
Reserves (£m)	14.0	11.9	11.7	11.7	11.8
Precept Assumption	2.99%	2.99%	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%

Reserves were held by the Authority to meet general financial risks and costs that might materialise (General Reserve) and to meet specific project costs or financial liabilities (Earmarked Reserves).

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

93/24 PROPOSAL TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF HFA AND GAS COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND CHANGES TO GAS COMMITTEE CO-OPTION PROCESS - The Monitoring Officer & Secretary presented a report proposing to reduce the number of HFA and GAS Committee meetings and to change the process for appointing members to the GAS Committee.

Humberside Fire Authority was an outlier amongst other combined or metropolitan fire authorities across England with the greatest number of meetings scheduled per municipal year (nine). The average number of Authority meetings per municipal year across combined and metropolitan fire authorities in England is five. Some had as few as three meetings scheduled a year (Cambridgeshire FRS and Kent FRS).

Various options for reducing meetings of HFA and GAS Committee, as set out below, were proposed, with Option 2 being the preferred option with immediate effect.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
HFA meetings	Reduce to 4 (June [AGM], July, November, February)	Reduce to 5 (June [AGM], July, November, February and March)	Reduce to 6 (June [AGM], July, September, November, February, March)
Member Days	Reduce to 3 (July, November, February)	Reduce to 4 (July, November, February, March)	Reduce to 5 (July, September, November, February, March)
GAS Committee meetings	Reduce to 3 (July, November, February)	Reduce to 4 (July, September, November, February)	Reduce to 5 (July, September, November, February, March)

Historically recruitment to the GAS Committee had proven difficult, attracting a limited pool of applicants who did not fully represent the wider Authority electorate. The report considered other ways to widen the co-option process that would attract individuals who possessed the general scrutiny and analytical skills required to offer the appropriate and effective challenge to the Service.

Rather than continue to rely on the current process for recruiting to the GAS Committee, it would be beneficial to widen the co-option process that allowed for individuals known by the Service to be proactively approached or encouraged to come forward and have a professional discussion, to ascertain their willingness and suitability to be co-opted onto the GAS Committee.

That would allow for a more streamlined and time efficient process for recruiting to the GAS Committee and as and when vacancies arose on the Committee it would make for a timelier appointment to the vacancy.

The alternative option to fill vacancies on the Committee would be to co-opt HFA Members. The benefit that would bring was that HFA Members already possessed the general scrutiny skills required to offer the appropriate and effective challenge to the Service.

The disadvantage of that proposal was that it would dilute the independency of the Committee, as any Fire Authority Member co-opted onto the Committee would be in essence scrutinising their own role and decisions (marking their own homework) and therefore might not have such an open mind when considering certain topics.

Members challenged whether, legally and constitutionally, the Authority could amend its own schedule of meetings. Members were advised by the Monitoring Officer and Secretary that meetings of HFA were constituted under the Local Government Act 1972 and Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Neither Acts, however, stipulated the number of meetings a Fire Authority must hold per municipal year. Likewise, there was nothing in the Authority's Constitution that stated there must be a specific number of meetings per municipal year. Whilst, under Part 4, 1.3 of the Constitution, an annual schedule of meetings was agreed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the HFA, this was just an indicative schedule for the year ahead; the HFA could vary this schedule as it determined at any time. Likewise, the Chair of the HFA had the ability to call additional meetings or cancel meetings.

It was also noted that a reduction in the number of meetings did not reduce the responsibilities placed on Members in their role as Fire Authority representatives. The workload, including attendance at Member Days, Member Champion and District meetings, remained the same for Members; it was simply that the volume of core business could be better fitted into a compacted meeting schedule.

Resolved - That with immediate effect -

(a) Option 2 in the report relating to reducing the number of HFA and GAS Committee meetings be approved, and

(b) Proposal 1 in the report relating to widening the co-option process for the GAS Committee be approved.

94/24 REPORT ON HFA MEMBERS ALLOWANCE BY THE EAST RIDING MEMBERS ALLOWANCE PANEL - The Monitoring Officer & Secretary presented a report on behalf of the East Riding Members Allowance Panel.

The law required the Fire Authority to provide a scheme that provided for the payment of allowances each year to each member of the authority. Where the Authority sought to review any aspect of its scheme, it must first take account of any recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel (Members' Allowances Panel) established for that purpose.

The Panel was required to make recommendations on the Members' Allowances Scheme, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 which made provision for Combined Fire Authorities to establish Member Allowances Schemes from May 2003.

The Panel met throughout April and May of 2024 and whilst it received administrative support and advice from a small group of Humberside Fire and Rescue Service and East Riding of Yorkshire Council officers, the recommendations put forward were solely from the Panel.

Recommendation 1	That the amount of Basic Allowance should be set at £4,747
Recommendation 2	That the Special Responsibility Allowances should be set at The Chair of the Authority £11,861 The Vice Chair of the Authority £8,899 The Chairs of Committees £597
Recommendation 3	That allowances for co-optees should be set at Chairperson of the Committee £1,789 All other Members of the Committee £1,577
Recommendation 4	That allowances for Dependant Carers' Allowances (childcare and dependant carers) are increased by 6.5%
Recommendation 5	That the current arrangements within the Scheme for travelling and subsistence be amended as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mileage rates – should be paid the same as the HMRC rate (45p up to 10,000 and 25p for additional miles thereafter) • Bicycle rate – should be paid the same as the HMRC rate at 20p per mile • Motorcycle – should be 24p per mile • Public transport actual cost • Subsistence allowance rates be increased by 6.5%.

Recommendation 6	That the proposed changes be effective from 1 May 2024 and the revised Scheme revoke all previous Schemes on that date.
Recommendation 7	The Panel would endeavour to meet and review the scheme prior to the next annual meeting.

Resolved – (a) That the report be approved, subject to the following changes:

- (i) That the proposed changes to the Members Allowance scheme be effective from 1 October 2024, and
- (ii) That the Panel be asked to review the scheme prior to the annual general meeting in 2026.

95/24 HMICFRS STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR - THE HANDLING OF MISCONDUCT IN FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES - The Executive Director of People and Development presented a report that detailed the findings of HMICFRS regarding the standards of behaviour within Fire and Rescue Services.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published its report '*Standards of Behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services*' on 1 August 2024.

The findings of the report were informed by thematic inspections of 10 different Services delivered between October 2023 to January 2024 and included Humberside Fire and Rescue Service in November 2023.

The report made 15 recommendations across three themes. In total, as some of the recommendations had multiple parts, 35 actions were identified requiring evidence to demonstrate Service compliance, with many of already established practices in the Service.

It was important to note the findings in the report were not individually attributed to any of the 10 Fire and Rescue Services inspected, with no individual assessment grading issued.

Report recommendations and resulting actions were addressed and managed by Corporate Assurance through the Service Improvement Plan, to ensure preset HMICFRS deadlines were achieved.

HFRS welcomed the report and was committed to the highest standards being used in the handling of misconduct in the Service. The Service had established the process to address each of the recommendations and would provide quarterly updates to Members going forward.

Resolved - That the report be received.

96/24 GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY – PHASE 2 REPORT - The Area Manager of Prevention, Protection, Fleet & Estates gave a verbal update following the publication of the Phase 2 Report of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry report had been released with 58 recommendations which were in addition to the 46 recommendations published in Phase 1 of the report. The recommendations were a mix for actioning by Industry, Fire and Rescue Services and Local Authorities, and included the proposal for the creation of a College of Fire Service to provide fire service training to nationally approved standards.

The National Fire Service Council were now reflecting on how to take the recommendations forward. The Service had convened a working group to address the recommendations pertinent to the Service, which felt it was in a good position having addressed all the relevant recommendations from the Phase 1 report.

Further updates would be brought to the Authority to update on progress being made against the recommendations.

Resolved - That the update be received.

97/24 SALE OF FORMER EAST HULL FIRE STATION, SOUTHCOATES LANE – UPDATE - The Area Manager of Prevention, Protection, Fleet & Estates presented a report which provided Members with an update on the current position of the former East Hull Fire Station at Southcoates Lane, following the decision taken by the Fire Authority to dispose of the surplus site in June 2019.

The Service was not able to immediately commence the sale of the site in June 2019 due to having an existing rental agreement with a telecommunications provider for the siting of a mast on the drill tower. Notice to cease that agreement was served to the mast operator in September 2018 with the notice period being 18 months.

The intention was to put the site up for sale following the completion of that notice period in March 2020 but unfortunately at that point in time the country was in the midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic, so a sale was not feasible or practical. Therefore the Service, working with partners, made the site available as a community asset and it was developed into a vaccination centre.

Now that the Southcoates Lane site was no longer required as a community asset and was unoccupied, the sale of the site would commence.

Resolved - That the report be received.

98/24 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER UPDATE - The Assistant Chief Fire Officer & Executive Director of Corporate Services provided a verbal update.

- i. Civil unrest– Members were provided with an account of the Service’s involvement in the civil unrest incidents that took place across the Humberside area in August. Unusually, for what was generally a police incident, the Service chaired both the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) and and Tactical Coordination Group (TCG). Service resources were deployed to support the Police and other partner organisations in managing the incidents. A report, detailing the resources and personnel deployed during the incidents had been submitted to the Prime Minister’s office.
- ii. Remembering Absent Friends – To mark its 50th Anniversary, the Service hosted an event on 11th October to remember and honour those staff who had sadly passed away whilst employed at Humberside Fire and Rescue Service. Past and present colleagues, families and friends were invited to attend the event, to pay tribute to the everlasting mark those individuals had left on people’s lives and the communities they had served.
- iii. Fire Fighters Charity - Staff had raised £72,000 for the Firefighters’ charity in the year up to August. That had been achieved through the clothing recycle bins, charity car wash events, individual and community charity events and fire station open days.
- iv. The Hull FIRST (Falls Intervention Response Safety Team) contract which currently covered Hull and some areas of East Riding had now been extended further into the East Riding.
- v. New Recruits - Members of SLT had met with the latest set of new recruits (a mixture of both fulltime and on-call firefighters) on Monday 16th September. It was pleasing to learn that this recruitment intake was made up of a broad range of diverse characteristics.
- vi. HMICFRS Inspection update – The Service was in the midst of its HMICFRS Round 3 inspection. Over a 9-week period from 26 July to 27 September the following inspection activities and staff engagement had taken place:
 - Total number of sessions/activities: 57
 - Total number of staff involved: 184 (20 Desktops, 30 Interviews, 80 reality testing, 54 focus groups)
 - Total number of documents requested: 111 (71 pre-inspection documents, 40 requests for information following activities/interviews)

The Inspection commenced on 26 July with the submission of the Document Return, Self-Assessment and Pre-Head of HR Interview Survey. The first interview (Head of Finance) took place on 1 August followed by the Strategic Brief, Interview with Chair of HFA and Partnership Interviews x 4 (NHS, Hull City Council, Humberside Police, ESFM), with further interviews, desktop and reality testing exercises, and focus groups ensuing. The Inspection would conclude on 27 September with the interview with Chief Fire Officer. It was expected that the outcome of the Inspection would not be known until the New Year.

Resolved - That the update be noted.

99/24 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 1 & 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.

100/24 SENIOR OFFICERS PAY REVIEW – The Monitoring Officer & Secretary presented a report on a review of Senior Officers pay undertaken by RealWorldHR, and independent management consultancy firm.

Resolved - That all of the recommendations within the report from RealWorldHR be approved, the appropriate pay point for the CFO's pay is in the middle of the upper quartile for Combined Fire Authorities as per the rates detailed in table 4.4 and is to be implemented as per the standard effective pay award date for Principal Officers under the Gold Book Terms and Conditions.