

**HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY**  
**GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**4 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**PRESENT:** Independent Co-opted Members Chris Brown, Melissa Dearey and Nigel Saxby

**Officers Present:** Matthew Sutcliffe – Assistant Chief Fire Officer & Executive Director of Corporate Services, Mark Blenkinsop – Head of Joint Estates, Andy Day – Head of Function, Jason Kirby – Area Manager of Emergency Response, Jamie Morris – Designate Head of Corporate Assurance, Martyn Ransom – Joint Deputy Chief Finance Officer & Deputy S.151 Officer, via Microsoft Teams Andy McCulloch – Internal Audit (TIAA), Lisa Nicholson – Monitoring Officer/Secretary, and Rob Close – Committee Manager.

**External Audit**

Ross Woodley – Mazars

**Internal Audit**

Andrew McCulloch - TIAA (in remote attendance)

Councillor Briggs was also in attendance.

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

**40/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – Apologies for absence were received from Kathryn Lavery and Gerry Wareham.

**41/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – No declarations of interest were made with respect to any items on the agenda.

**42/23 MINUTES** – Members of the Committee expressed an interest in seeing an update to the scrutiny item on grievance procedures in January 2024.

**Resolved** – (a) *That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.*

(b) *That the Committee receive an update to the scrutiny item on grievance procedures in January 2024.*

**43/23 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS PERIOD ENDING 30 JUNE 2023** – The Committee received a report of the Deputy Joint Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Section 151 Officer detailing the final outturn report. The Committee was advised that the Service ran an underspend of £0.295m with all capital projects on budget. Investments were considered to be yielding an acceptable return. The reserve budget was still underspent however this took into account the forthcoming pay award.

It was clarified that the contracts awarded outside of tender process were done so with the knowledge that the providers had specialist knowledge and experience in those works. The decisions not to create a new tender was made at an area manager level and was subject to an audit.

The on-call fire fighters' pay underspend would be addressed as part of a reprofiling exercise. Impacts were seen as a result of bank holidays and new recruits.

**Resolved** - *That the report be received.*

**44/23 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS** – The Committee received a report of TIAA, the Authority’s internal auditors, detailing the internal audit reports. The Committee was advised that there was one additional piece of work being included on the internal audit plan considering procurement exercises.

The Committee were interested to know how the field work for the audits was conducted. The internal auditors agreed to give some further detail of this outside of the meeting.

**Resolved** – *That the report be received.*

**45/23 External Audit Completion Report** – The Committee received a report of Mazars, the Authority’s external auditors, detailing the external audit completion report. The Committee was advised that there were significant delays in local audits, and it was a great testament to the finance team for getting their audit completion report for 2022/23. There were no significant changes to bring to Members’ attention and it was noted that the audit’s sign off will follow the previous year’s timetable.

The investment referred in the report to awaiting confirmation from the National Audit Office. This was an issue faced by all Fire and Rescue Services in the country and not specific to Humberside.

**Resolved** - *That the update be noted.*

**46/23 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2022/23 (AUDITED)** – The Committee received a report of the Deputy Joint Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Section 151 Officer detailing the audited annual statement of accounts for 2022/23. The Committee was advised that these accounts would be going, with some minor amendments, to the meeting of Humberside Fire Authority in September.

The Committee suggested that a further breakdown of the type of fires be added to the Service Performance Summary 2022/23.

**Resolved** - *That the update be noted.*

**45/23 SCRUTINY ITEM: DIGNITY WORKS SCHEME** – The Committee received a report of the Area Manager of Prevention, Protection, Fleet and Estates.

The Committee was advised that since 2011, the Service had been undertaking an improvement programme of dignity works to its Estate. Further to this, in 2018, the Service published its Professional Standards Dignity at Work Policy before making a marked improvement and significant increase in the provision of dignity works, to ensure full compliance with both the Dignity at Work Bill 2001 and the Equality Act 2010.

The Service always had a reactive approach to Estate management and since 2011/12 the Service invested just short of £4 million in dignity works across the Estate. Work began to ensure that the Service’s Estate was fully compliant and appropriate for use, following the Service publishing its Professional Standards Dignity at Work Policy. Whilst this programme of work was being undertaken, the Service’s inspection by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in 2022 highlighted that problem areas still existed, resulting in a full review of the dignity improvement scheme.

Further works were already being planned or progressed to ensure that the Service became fully compliant with the support of a task and finish working group led by a Service Delivery Manager. To assist in the identification and progress of future work, the Service planned to adopt an NHS method of Estate inspection and improvement called 'The Six Facet Survey' which sought to consider:

- The building's condition
- Its overall functional suitability (this included Dignity and Welfare, Clean areas, Storage, Security and Gym/Rest areas).
- Space utilisation
- Quality of its amenities, comfort, and environment
- Statutory Compliance items, such as Health & Safety, Asbestos and Flood Risks.
- The buildings energy ratings

The Committee then considered the following aspects:

- **Requests for Transfers** – It was clarified that, while requests for station transfers were not uncommon, these usually came as a result of ambitions for busier work or proximity to home rather than the facilities offered at stations.
- **Staff Surveys** – Issues of facilities were not a common issue raised under staff surveys.
- **Expectations** – Officers were confident that staff were comfortable with the conditions currently available to them. There was some concern that facilities may act as a disincentive to recruitment, however the evidence available did not support this.
- **Inspections** – A new member of staff was recruited to, to join joint services for a full programme of inspections before the end of 2023. Following that, a five-year plan would provide a concise roadmap for ongoing maintenance and refurbishment.

**Resolved** – *That the update be noted.*

**46/23 GAS COMMITTEE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 2023/24** – The Committee Manager submitted a report summarising the Committee's Scrutiny Programme 2023/24.

**Resolved** - *That the Programme be received.*