

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

**10 JULY 2024**

**PRESENT:** Independent Co-opted Members Chris Brown (Chair), Melissa Dearey, and Gerry Wareham.

**Officers Present:** Martyn Ransom - Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer, Steve Duffield – Area Manager of Service Improvement, Shaun Edwards – Head of Finance, Jon Henderson – Area Manager of Prevention, Protection, Fleet and Estates Jason Kirby – Area Manager of Emergency Response, David Robinson – Internal Audit (TIAA), Emma Appleton – Deputy Monitoring Officer/Secretary, and Rob Close – Committee Manager.

Rejoice Mapeto (Mazars) was in remote attendance.

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

**31/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – Apologies for absence were received from Nigel Saxby.

**32/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – No declarations of interest were made with respect to any items on the agenda.

**33/24 MINUTES – Resolved** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

**34/24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24** – The Committee received a report of the Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer summarising Authority's treasury management activity and Prudential Indicators for the year 2023/24. It was advised that the Authority earned £0.81m in interest in the year 2023/24 and closing Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) debt fell by £0.8m to £16.7m. The Authority's average level of borrowing was £17.5m for 2023/24 and was considered under borrowed against projections. Capital expenditure sat short of the projected sum by some £2m as a result of capital project slippage. The ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream for the current year sat at 1.45 per cent.

The Committee asked what the Authority's next steps were in order to achieve an outstanding graded financial position. It was advised that the Authority would seek to develop a greater understanding of its cost basis. While public sector finances remained in their current state, and with the limitations of a one-year settlement, the Authority expected no changes to its fiscal forecast until a comprehensive spending review had been completed. However, it was stressed that the Authority was looking to introduce zero-base budgeting in the hope of transitioning its fiscal forecast from good to outstanding.

**Resolved** – That the Committee endorse the Treasury Management Annual Report 2023/24.

**35/24 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24 (UNAUDITED)** – The Committee received a report of the Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer summarising Authority's unaudited annual statement of accounts for 2023/24. It was advised that the accounts were completed within the specified deadline, had been signed and published, and were due to have been audited by November 2024.

The Committee suggested that the Service Performance Summary 2023/24 contained comparisons to previous years for information.

**Resolved –** (a) That the Committee receive the Annual Statement of Accounts 2023/24.

(b) That the Committee recommend that the Service Performance Summary 2023/24 be amended to contain comparisons to previous years for information.

**36/24 Internal Audit Reports – Quarter One** – The Committee received a report of TIAA, the Authority's internal auditors, detailing the internal audit reports and Summary Internal Controls Assurance. One audit had been completed thus far on Staff Forums and EDI Steering Group receiving limited assurance, resulting in eight important recommendations and two routine recommendations being made.

There were no changes to the approved plan for 2024/25. Draft reports had been issued for the Application and Management of Disciplinary Procedures audit and the Training Records audit.

The Committee registered its surprise at the eight priority two actions listed against the Staff Forums and EDI Steering Group and sought further clarity on this matter. It was stressed that officers recognised that Staff Forums and EDI Steering Groups was an area that required renewed attention and noted its inclusion within the scrutiny programme for the GAS Committee. Furthermore, it was noted that, when inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Authority improved its previous grading of Requires Improvement to a grading of Good. The Service was now in the process of recruiting a dedicated lead officer for EDI who would scrutinise the EDI plan that had developed as a result of this audit. The Committee welcomed the news of a new dedicated role focussing on EDI.

TIAA, the Authority's internal auditors, added that a number of the recommendations made could be addressed quickly.

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

**37/24 SCRUTINY ITEM: HMICFRS VALUES AND CULTURE IN FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES** – The Committee received a report of the Area Manager of Service Improvement detailing the 'values and culture in fire and rescue services' report as published by HMICFRS in March 2023. The report made 35 recommendations across 9 themes. Chief Fire Officers had accountability for 19 of the recommendations, with the Home Office and the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) having accountability for the other recommendations. An action plan, with an integrated GAP analysis, was used to manage and record the Authority's progression against each of the recommendations, with information and evidence coordinated through a cross-departmental culture group. The first inspection for HFRS took place in 2018/19, the Authority's gradings were:

- Good for Effectiveness
- Good for Efficiency
- Requires Improvement for People

In 2021/22 the Authority had its second full inspection, and it's gradings were:

- Good for Effectiveness
- Good for Efficiency
- Good for People

During each inspection an assessment was made of organisational culture, against the following areas, all assessed as Good in the 2021/22 Inspection:

- Promoting the right values and culture
- Getting the right people with the right skills
- Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity
- Managing performance and developing leaders

The Authority was one of 10 subject to HMICFRS thematic misconduct inspection in November 2023. The scope of the inspection included a review of people related policies, desktop reviews, reality testing, staff forums and staff survey. Many of the areas inspected aligned with the recommendation themes detailed in the spotlight report, providing independent analysis of the Authority's position and progress. It was noted HMICFRS did not issue any graded judgment or individual report for any participating Authority, with the feedback provided through a verbal debrief, with a holistic sector report based on the findings from all 10 Fire and Rescue Services due for publication later in the summer.

RealWorldHR completed its independent staff engagement exercise of the Service with the resulting feedback and outcomes addressing related HMICFRS Spotlight report recommendations. It noted the Authority, although planned in advanced of HMICFRS report publication, purposefully awaited its release to enable both pieces of work to complement each other. The RealWorldHR independent staff engagement survey generated a 49 per cent response rate feedback mapped against HMICFRS and national report recommendations. A developed Culture Working Group with Service-wide staff representation was in place to manage and respond to each recommendation, coordinated through the Service Improvement Plan and Strategic Performance Meetings.

**Service Selection** – Authorities were selected for pilots by the NFCC. Humberside Fire and Rescue also did contributed to a pilot focussed on Grenfell Towers and offered to contribute to a future one on cyber security.

**RealWorldHR** – RealWorldHR was commissioned as an external organisation to conduct online surveys and arrange staff focus groups to identify the culture staff identified within the Service. While 49 per cent of staff responded, the Service hoped to increase that number through its own engagement works. It was stressed that, when staff were asked if they would recommend Humberside Fire and Rescue as an employer, over 80 per cent said they would do so.

**DBS Checks** – The Service was believed to be the only fire and rescue service in the country to achieve a 100 per cent DBS check for all its staff. It was stressed that unions were engaged with early on in the process.

**360 Feedback** – The Performance Development Review (PDR) process was directly informed by a 360 feedback process which was conducted at least one per year for all staff with line management responsibility. Additional to the 360-feedback exercise, staff had monthly one to ones with their line managers. The Committee encouraged the Service to support more junior managers in the 360 feedback process, suggesting that it could be onerous. Moreover, the Committee suggested that the Service consider adopting reverse monitoring as part of its PDR process.

**Resolved** – That the Committee takes assurance that the Service has effectively adopted the HMICFRS Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services.

**38/24 GAS COMMITTEE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 2024/25** - The Committee Manager submitted a report summarising the Committee's Scrutiny Programme 2024/25.

**Resolved** – That the work programme for 2024/25 be approved