

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY

15 MAY 2020

PRESENT:

Members

Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:

Councillors Chadwick, Davison, Fox, Green, Jefferson, Smith and West

Representing Hull City Council:

Councillors Chambers, Dad, McMurray, Nicola, Randall and Singh

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Barfield, James and Swinburn

Representing North Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Briggs (*Chairperson*), Grant, Sherwood and Waltham MBE

Officers of Humberside Fire & Rescue Service

Chris Blacksell - Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, Phil Shillito - Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Executive Director Service Delivery, Kevin Wilson - Executive Director of Corporate Services/Section 151 Officer, Paul McCourt - Director of Service Delivery, Steve Topham - Director of Service Delivery Support, Niall McKiniry - Director of Service Improvement, Christine Cooper - Temporary Director of People and Development, Mathew Buckley - Monitoring Officer/Secretary and Gareth Naidoo - Committee Manager

Also in attendance:

Independent Co-opted Members of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Martyn Allingham, Doug Chapman, James Doyle, Pam Jackson, Andrew Smith, Mandy Thomlinson and Clive Vertigans were in attendance as observers.

Internal Auditor

Andrew McCulloch - Director of Audit (TIAA) (presented Minutes 48/20 & 49/20)

External Auditor

Ross Woodley - Manager - Public Services (Mazars) (presented Minute 50/20)

HMICFRS

Davinder Johal - Service Liaison Lead (Merseyside FRS, Humberside FRS and Durham & Darlington FRS)

The remote meeting took place via video conference (Zoom).

39/20 TRIBUTE TO COUNCILLOR BRYAN - The Authority paid tribute to Councillor Bryan, East Riding of Yorkshire Councillor and Member of the Authority, who passed away recently.

40/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Shepherd and from Keith Hunter - Police and Crime Commissioner.

41/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - There were no declarations.

42/20 MINUTES - Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 13 March 2020 be received as a correct record.

43/20 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS - None.

44/20 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS - No petitions or requests for a deputation had been received.

45/20 COMMUNICATIONS - The following communication was received:

(i) **Vote of thanks to Service Staff** - The Chairperson placed on record his thanks to all Service staff for their hard work in continuing to maintain services and supporting the community during the Covid-19 pandemic.

(ii) **Meeting with the Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Communities** - The Chairperson and Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive had met with Lord Greenhalgh, the new Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Communities at the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

(iii) **Letter from the Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Communities** - A letter had been received from the Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Communities regarding the recommendations made in HMICFRS' *State of Fire and Rescue* report. Having completed the first round of service inspection in a decade the report provided a crucial opportunity to take stock on fire reform. The Minister was writing to all Fire Authorities to understand the views of the key national bodies on the report's recommendations that would inform the development of a forward strategy. The deadline for the Authority to provide submissions to the Minister was the end of June.

Resolved - That a copy of the response drafted by officers be brought to the June meeting of the Authority.

(iv) **Safer Roads Humber** - Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) continued to be issued across the Humber sub-region. Humberside Police had increased presence over the bank holiday weekend. Road Traffic Casualties (RTCs) were down considerably (26) compared with the same period last year (72).

(v) **Business Safety** - A Home Office grant of £175,000 had been awarded for Fire Safety Public Protection.

(vi) **Fire Brigade Union (FBU)** - A letter been received from the FBU that requested any fire fighter that had died as a result of Covid-19 should be treated as dying in service. This request had been made nationally and was being discussed by the relevant Government departments.

46/20 POSTPONEMENT OF AGM, CONTINUATION OF CURRENT APPOINTMENTS & CALENDAR OF MEETINGS DATES 2020/21 - The Secretary/Monitoring Officer submitted a report proposing the calendar of meetings for 2020/21, the postponement of the AGM and the continuation of current appointment until such time the AGM could be held, due to Covid-19.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Authority set the calendar of its meetings, and those of its committees, for the forthcoming year. Due to Covid-19 it would not be possible to hold the AGM as scheduled on 1 June 2020 and therefore would have to be postponed to as such a date deemed appropriate.

In the meantime the Authority was requested to approve the proposed calendar of meetings for 2020/21 as attached at Appendix 1.

In the absence of holding an AGM, under The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, the Chairman and all other appointments made by the Fire Authority and its Committees, would remain in post until the newly convened AGM. Likewise the membership of the Authority would remain as it was (unless otherwise determined by the local authorities) until the AGM was called. Post 7 May 2021 the Authority would revert to normal and hold its AGM on 4 June 2021.

Members welcomed the continuation of Member Days during this period, albeit remotely for the foreseeable future and that these would be theme based.

Resolved - (a) That the calendar of meeting dates for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix 1 be approved, and

(b) that that the AGM, scheduled for 1 June 2020, be postponed to such time as appropriate to be held and that the Chairman and all other appointments made by the Fire Authority and its Committees, remain in post until the newly convened AGM.

47/20 ANNUAL REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION - The Secretary/Monitoring Officer proposed amendments to the Authority's Constitution following the publication of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Following the enactment of the Coronavirus Act 2020 on 25 March 2020, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force on 4 April 2020.

The Regulations applied for the period up until 7 May 2021 and enabled the holding of 'Remote Meetings' "whereby Members of the Authority participate in and members of the public attend such meetings via telephone conference calls or video conferencing platforms."

Amendments therefore needed to be made to the Authority's Constitution in order to reflect the new legislation and deal with practice and procedure at Remote Meetings.

A Member questioned if the use of remote meetings or Members' attendance at meetings in a virtual capacity could continue to operate post May 2021. At present the Regulations ceased to apply after 7 May 2021 and so it would depend on whether the Government amended or passed new legislation that would allow for the continuation of a mixture of physical, remote or hybrid meetings post May 2021.

Resolved - That the amendments to the 'Summary and Explanation', Articles 4, 6 & 10, Part 4 - Procedure Rules and Section B - Access To Information Procedure Rules of the Authority's Constitution, as shown by track changes (in red, italic and underline text), at Appendix 1 of the report be approved.

48/20 AUDIT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2020/21 - The Internal Auditor (TIAA) submitted the Audit Strategy and Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21.

The Audit Plan for 2020/21 had been informed by consideration of the key issues and risks facing the service following discussion with senior management and TIAA's understanding of risk more widely affecting Fire Authorities and Fire and Rescue Services. The resultant plan would ensure that coverage for the year was focussed on the key audit risk and would enable a robust annual Head of Internal Audit Opinion to be provided.

This year would be another challenging year for the Service as it strove to provide efficient and effective services against a backdrop of continued budget pressure, and it continued to implement planned service improvements along with those identified during the last Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection and implications arising from the current Covid-19 situation.

TIAA had identified a number of key areas which required consideration when planning internal audit coverage:

- **Operational Pressures** - Notwithstanding everyday operational pressures, the Service had recently had to deal with significant floods in the region. The service was currently supporting communities, the NHS and the Yorkshire Ambulance Service during the global Covid-19 pandemic;
- **Workforce** - Studies had shown that work pressures were affecting the health and wellbeing of the workforce and from an operational perspective there was a continual need to ensure firefighters received appropriate and timely training in particular in relation to changes in response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy and subsequent enquiry;
- **ICT Security and Cybercrime** - Cybercrime continued to increase in scale and complexity; fraudulent activity had increased significantly during the current pandemic.

The reviews identified in the audit plan for 2020/21 supported the Head of Internal Audit’s annual opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation’s framework of governance, risk management and control as required by TIAA’s charter. The reviews had been identified from your assurance framework, risk registers and key emerging themes.

It was acknowledged that ICT security and cybercrime was a significant area and as a consequence would be brought forward in the Audit and given due consideration.

Resolved - That the Audit Strategy and Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 be approved.

49/20 INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20 (APRIL 2020) - The Internal Auditor (TIAA) submitted the Interim Internal Audit Annual Report for 2019/20.

This was the 2019/20 Annual Report by TIAA on the internal control environment at Humberside Fire & Rescue Service. The annual internal audit report summarised the outcomes of the reviews carried out on the organisation’s framework of governance, risk management and control.

The delivery of the internal audit work for 2019/20 had been impacted by the global Covid-19 pandemic which had taken hold during this accounting period. As a result, TIAA was not able to complete the review of Business Safety. The review of Workforce Planning was deferred due to staff absence not related to the current pandemic.

Notwithstanding this, TIAA had still provided enough internal audit coverage in order to be able to provide an opinion based on the work carried out to date. Not completing the reviews highlighted above had not impacted on the overall assessment.

The Head of Internal Audit’s Interim Annual Opinion (TIAA) was satisfied that, for the areas reviewed during the year, Humberside Fire & Rescue Service had reasonable and effective risk management, control and governance processes in place. Not having completed one piece of work due to the global Covid-19 pandemic had not impacted on our overall assessment.

This opinion was based solely on the matters that came to the attention of TIAA during the course of the internal audit reviews carried out during the year and was not an opinion on all elements of the risk management, control and governance processes or the ongoing financial viability or your ability to meet financial obligations which had to be obtained by the Service from its various sources of assurance.

TIAA carried out seven reviews, which were designed to ascertain the extent to which the internal controls in the system were adequate to ensure that activities and procedures were operating to achieve the Service’s objectives. For each assurance review an assessment of the combined effectiveness of the controls in mitigating the key control risks was provided. Details of these were provided in Annex A and a summary set out below.

Assurance Assessments	Number of Reviews	Previous Year
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Substantial Assurance	1	2
Reasonable Assurance	5	3
Limited Assurance	1	2
No Assurance	0	0

Resolved - That the Interim Internal Audit Annual Report 2019/21 (April 2020) be received.

50/20 EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT APRIL 2020 - The External Auditor (Mazars) submitted the external Audit Progress Report April 2020.

The report set out progress on the external audit. Mazars’ planned work in relation to the 2019/20 audit for Humberside Fire Authority was now complete and had reported its Audit Strategy Memorandum for the 2019/20 audit to the January 2020 meeting of the Governance and Audit Scrutiny (GAS) Committee. The Audit Strategy Memorandum described the four stages of the audit, the planning stage being the first. Mazars had now completed the second stage (interim audit) and there were no issues to bring to members attention.

On 5 February 2020 Mazras held Local Government Financial Reporting workshops for officers involved in the production of the financial statements and officers responsible for preparing Authority’s financial statements attended. These workshops provided an update on the latest developments as well as a forum to discuss emerging issues. It included a revisit of 2018/19 final accounts issues, early close implications, changes in the 2019/20 Code and a forward look to future regulatory and policy changes.

Mazars had now completed the first stage of audit. Regular contact with clients had continued during Covid-19 lockdown. Being on track for a June/July completion, the auditors were not intending to utilise an extension that had been made available nationally.

Resolved - That the External Audit Progress Report April 2020 be approved.

51/20 DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019/20 - The Executive Director of Corporate Services/S.151 Officer & Secretary/Monitoring Officer & Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Executive Director Service Delivery submitted the draft Annual Governance Statement 2019/20.

The CIPFA/SOLACE good governance framework brought together a number of governance principles and requirements, including replacing the previous Statement of Internal Control with a new Annual Governance Statement (AGS) from 2007/08.

The report set out a draft AGS in respect to 2019/20 (as attached at Appendix 1). Given the content of the Statement, it was felt desirable that the Authority should specifically review the AGS separate from the Annual Accounts, although the AGS would form part of the Annual Accounts once approved in June 2020.

It was also desirable that the Authority receive this report in advance of the draft Annual Accounts at the June 2020 meeting.

This report was considered by the Chair of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee in lieu of the Committee meeting 6 April 2020 being cancelled, due to Covid-19.

Resolved - That the draft Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 as set out at Appendix 1 of the report be approved.

52/20 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS 2019/20 FOR PERIOD ENDING 29 FEBRUARY 2020 - The Executive Director of Corporate Services and S.151 Officer submitted a report that highlighted the current financial position based on information to 29 February 2020.

The summary estimated outturn position for the current financial year based on information to 29 February 2020 was as follows:

CATEGORY	2019/20 OUTTURN PROJECTION	
HFA		
Revenue Budget	£13k	overspend
Capital Programme	£2.612m	expenditure against £6.608m allocation
Pensions Account	£12.536m	deficit

This was the final set of Management Accounts for the 2019/20 financial year and work was already advanced on the delivery of the outturn and Annual Accounts for 2019/20.

Covid-19 Update - Financial Implications

The Service had been responding to the Covid-19 crisis and costs had been incurred on staffing, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and also IT equipment to support remote working. Limited costs were incurred before the close of the 2019/20 financial year (£7k).

Further costs had been incurred in the current financial year as the Service’s response to the crisis had intensified. Spend up to 30 April 2020 in total since the crisis began had now reached circa £200k.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had issued funding to Local Authorities and Fire and Rescue Services in two tranches, each totalling £1.6bn. In the first tranche the Service received £225k and in the second tranche the Service was allocated a further £694k. The money was not ring-fenced and Authorities were expected to apply the funding as they saw best to deal with the crisis.

Some caution was needed however, because should council tax income levels be adversely affected by the crisis then clearly the funding allocated would likely not be sufficient to deal with this and further support would be required from Government to make good any significant shortfall in income from that source. This picture would not be fully understood until further towards the end of the current 2020/21 financial year.

Further details on all of these areas were available electronically alongside the agenda papers on the Fire Authority’s website at <https://humbersidefire.gov.uk/fire-authority/fire-authority-documents/humberside-fire-authority-15-may-2020>.

Additional funding and additional expenditure for the Service on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), IT and staff were discussed, alongside Council tax collection being seen as an assessed risk that would need to be reviewed in time.

Resolved - That the Management Accounts 2019/21 for the period ending 29 February 2020 be received.

53/20 PERFORMANCE REPORTING AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2020/21 -

The Director of Service Improvement submitted a report that provided information regarding the reporting of Service performance for the period 2020/21 and the proposed Service Performance Indicators and targets for that period, which were included at Appendix 1.

Performance against all of the Service’s Strategic Objectives would be monitored and retrospectively reported to the Authority on a quarterly basis following scrutiny by the Governance Audit and Scrutiny (GAS) Committee. The Authority would receive three quarterly reports, followed by the Annual Performance Report which would incorporate performance information from the fourth quarter. This was in line with the reporting of performance for 2019/20 and the Annual Performance Report for that period, which would be presented to Members at the July meeting.

The same principles as for 2019/20 had been applied to target setting at Service level in 2020/21:

- Targets were based upon a rolling three year average baseline.

- If the three year baseline showed a gradual worsening of performance then targets would be set to stabilise that performance during the forthcoming year.
- If the three year baseline showed no change then targets would be set to gradually improve that performance over the forthcoming year.
- If the three year baseline showed a steady improvement in performance then targets would be set to maintain that improvement.
- Incident based targets were seasonally adjusted to account for known variances throughout the year.
- Whilst there were no national performance indicators, benchmarking and comparison of targets and approach was achieved via our Fire and Rescue Family Group. Any issues of interest would be reported to Members.

Whilst each Quarterly Performance and Risk Reports was to be presented in a similar style to 2019/20, with summary tables and graphical images the opportunity would continue to be taken to supplement standard reports with other outcome based qualitative information and to develop the range of performance information presented to Members. During 2020/21 this would include:

- Greater focus on risk and intelligence led targeting of Safe and Well Visits and Business Safety activities.
- Assurances around the crewing (availability) of fire engines.
- Control Room emergency call handling.
- The impact of processes to manage Unwanted Fire Signal levels of attendance
- Non-operational staff mandatory training and development.

Live Power BI Management Performance dashboards were now an effective management tool for officers and would be used to graphically represent data and performance reporting during 2020/21, both within management team meetings and in performance reporting and presentations to Members. This would be supplementary to the retrospective reports.

Resolved - That the report be received.

54/20 COVID-19 RESPONSE - The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive & Deputy Chief Fire Officer/ Executive Director Service Delivery provided an update on the Service's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tribute was paid to fire fighters who had died as a result of Covid-19.

The Service took extensive measures prior to Covid-19 lockdown occurring by splitting staff up across stations to limit cross contamination and supported staff to work from home where possible. Operational staff were undertaking their operations using appropriate social distance measures and stringent cleaning procedures were in place.

The total of personnel absent (regular and Covid-19 related) during this period was 4.12 percent compared to the 4.87 percent national average. Only a small number of staff (cleaners at closed sites) had been furloughed.

Appliance availability had continued to be high in terms of full-time and on-call crews despite the effects of Covid-19. First Engine availability was operating at 98.37 percent and Second Engine availability at 96.75 percent.

The Service had extensive business continuity plans in place and these continued to be reviewed. The Service was developing plans on how best to allow more staff to start returning to work who couldn't work from home. This was an extremely difficult and trying time for all personnel and the Service recognised this and the need for supporting staff appropriate through this crisis.

A joint Working Group would be set up to aid the return to full service delivery. The Group would consider four key areas:

- Covid-19 specific activity;

- Activity ceased during Covid-19 that needed to be reinstated;
- Activity ceased during Covid-19 that might not need to be reinstated
- New activity that needed to be maintained or taken forward and developed further.

The Service had not required to call upon retired fire fighters during this period due to low staff absence rates. This did, however, continue to be monitored.

Resolved - That the update be received.