

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY

24 JULY 2020

PRESENT:

Members

Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:

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

Representing Hull City Council:

Councillors Chambers, Dad, McMurray, Nicola and Singh

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Barfield, James, Shepherd 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, Steve Topham - Director of Service Delivery Support, Niall McKiniry - Director of Service Improvement, Ruth Gilmour - Head of Human Resources, Mathew Buckley - Monitoring Officer/Secretary and Gareth Naidoo - Committee Manager

Auditors

Gavin Barker - External Auditor (Mazars)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

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

Martin Allingham, Doug Chapman (presented Minute 76/20) and Andrew Smith were in attendance as observers.

HMICFRS

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

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

69/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Davison and Randall, and from Keith Hunter - Police and Crime Commissioner for Humberside Police.

70/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - No declarations were made.

71/20 MINUTES - Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 26 June 2020 be received as a correct record.

72/20 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS - Councillor Barfield was permitted to ask the following question:

“Now that all local functions of Humberside Fire and Rescue Service within Grimsby will be based at Peakes Lane this will leave Cromwell Road Station underutilised. What are the Authorities long term plans for the site and is closure of the site a possibility and if not, what steps are being taken to make sure the site is fully utilised?”

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive replied that there were no plans to stop using Cromwell Road Station and in fact it was probably the Service’s most diverse estate outside of Headquarters (operational crew, public safety teams and community use). Due to COVID-19, staff had ceased working from Peakes Lane Station but would start to return during the day from 10 August. Operational response would still continue to run from Cromwell Road Station on a night along with all other aspects of operations during the day as normal.

73/20 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS - No petitions or requests for a deputation had been received under Rule 13, Part 4 of the Constitution.

74/20 COMMUNICATIONS - The following communication was reported:

- (i) **Review of Police and Crime Commissioner** - The Home Secretary on 22 July 2020 outlined plans to initiate a two-part review of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) mode. The first stage of the review would be focused on strengthening how the current model operated and would also help inform the long-term ambition on fire governance reform ahead of the next national PCC elections in May 2021. Part two would involve a broader examination of the model’s future trajectory but would not commence until after the elections in May next year and would build on the findings from part one. The review would also be fully aligned with the Government’s commitment to expand the benefits of devolution across England through the Local Recovery and English Devolution White Paper, which was due to be published in the Autumn.
- (ii) **Fire & Rescue Service Performance Indicator Review** - A series of correspondence had taken place between the Service and Fire Minister that sought Fire and Rescue Services’ views on the current performance indicators. The Service had fed back to the Minister that that some measures used could be improved upon or revised.
- (iii) **Customer Service Excellence Award** - The assessment report for Customer Service Award had now been published and found that “the continued award of the Customer Service Excellence Standard had been recommended” for the Service. The assessment awarded 9 areas with Good Practice and 3 areas with Compliance Plus.

75/20 DRAFT MINUTES OF PENSION BOARD OF 6 JULY 2020 - Resolved - That the minutes of the Pension Board held on 6 July 2020 be received.

76/20 DRAFT MINUTES OF GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY (GAS) COMMITTEE OF 13 JULY 2020 - Doug Chapman, Chairperson of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny (GAS) Committee, presented the draft minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 July 2020, drawing Members’ attention to the following item:

- (i) Draft Annual Performance Report 2019/20 (Minute 51/20 refers).
- (ii) GAS Committee Scrutiny Programme 2020/21 (Minute 56/20 refers).
- (iii) Training (Minute 59/20 refers).
- (iv) Member Days (Minute 61/20 refers).

Resolved - That the minutes of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny (GAS) Committee held on 13 July 2020 be received.

77/20 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION - CONSULTATION ON DRAFT MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT - The Monitoring Officer/Secretary updated Members on the Local Government Association’s consultation on the draft Model Code of Conduct.

The Local Government Association (LGA) had committed to reviewing the current model member code of conduct, as recommended by the Committee on Standards in Public Life’s report into Local Government Ethical Standards. The LGA held an event on Civility in Public Life with a range of stakeholders at the end of last year and three consultation workshops at the beginning of this year. Its consultants had also examined examples of good practice, both in local government and other professions. The LGA consultation draft model member code of conduct was the result of this initial work and it was the intention to create additional guidance, working examples and explanatory text. The LGA very much welcomed comment on the consultation draft and in particular would like to know if it stood up to the new ways of working that had been introduced and gave enough of a steer on social media and online activity.

The consultation on the draft member code of conduct would run for 10 weeks from Monday 8 June until Monday 17 August. It was hoped that this would provide officers and members with enough time to reflect on the draft model member code of conduct and provide the LGA with feedback whilst it continued to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

The GAS Committee considered the draft model Code of Conduct at its meeting of 13 July 2020 and provided a number of comment.

GAS members agreed in principle with having a Code of Conduct. This draft while heading in the right direction was felt to be too widely open to interpretation. In particular the boundary over when a councillor was acting as a councillor was vague.

The phrase “...although you are expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times” seemed to take it beyond the code itself.

GAS members were also concerned about the lack of definitions (e.g. treat all persons with civility is deeply subjective) and therefore there needed to be much more clarity of intent and phrasing.

Resolved - (a) That Members feed back any comments they may have on the draft model Code of Conduct to the Monitoring officer by 31 July 2020 prior to the Monitoring Officer submitting a response on behalf of the Authority in consultation with Chairperson, and

(b) that a copy of the response be circulated in due course to Members for their information.

78/20 MANAGEMENT OF ACCOUNTS PERIOD ENDING 30 JUNE 2020 - The Executive Director of Corporate Services/S.151 Officer submitted a highlight report of the current financial position based on information to 30 June 2020.

The summary estimated outturn position for the current financial year based on information to 30 June 2020 was as follows:

CATEGORY	2020/21 OUTTURN PROJECTION
HFA	
Revenue Budget	£108k overspend

Capital Programme	£910k	expenditure against £6.718m allocation
Pensions Account	£9.814m	deficit

This was the first set of Management Accounts for the 2020/21 financial year and further updates would be brought to the Authority based on the periods ending 30/9/20, 31/12/20 and 28/2/21.

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 (£9k). Further costs had been incurred in the current financial year as the Service’s response to the crisis had intensified. Spend and commitments up to 30 June 2020 in the current year were £360,000, leaving £550,000 remaining of the £919,000 COVID-19 grant from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It was envisaged that any surplus remaining of the grant would not have to be paid back to MHCLG.

Members questioned whether the remaining £550,000 of the COVID-19 grant from MHCLG would be adequate to cover subsequent COVID-19 related activity. This would be dependent on whether there was a second wave in the winter in which case it is likely that additional support would be needed from Government again.

Further details on all of areas of the accounts were available electronically alongside the agenda papers on the [Fire Authority’s website](#).

Resolved - That the report be received.

79/20 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2019/20 - The Executive Director of Corporate Services/S.151 Officer submitted a report that included the audited version of the Fire Authority’s Accounts for the financial year 2019/20.

The audit of the Authority’s 2019/20 Statement of Accounts had now been substantially completed. In partnership with the Authority’s external auditor, Mazars, a small number of adjustments to the draft Accounts had been undertaken in order to reach the final version. These were detailed in the ‘External Audit - Audit Completion Report’ (Minute 80/20 refers) of this meeting.

Once the Annual Accounts were approved, the ‘Letter of Representation’ would be duly signed and passed to the Authority’s nominated Director at Mazars. As covered by Mazars in their report (Minute 80/20 refers) there would be a delay in the issuing of the final audit certificate until the Pension Fund Auditor had completed their work and the Whole of Government Accounts process had been completed. The audit would be signed-off and a final audit certificate issued when those final two elements had been concluded.

The final version of the Annual Accounts was attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

Resolved - (a) That the audited Statement of Accounts 2019/20 be approved and signed by the Chairperson of the Authority, and

(b) that the work of Finance team be commended for their timeliness in completing the Statement of Accounts.

80/20 EXTERNAL AUDIT - AUDIT COMPLETION REPORT - YEAR ENDING 31 March 2020 - Gavin Barker from Mazars (External Audit) submitted the Audit Completion Report for the year ending 31 March 2020.

The scope of External Audit’s work, including identified significant audit risks and other areas of management judgement, was outlined in our Audit Strategy Memorandum which was presented

to the Authority on 24 January 2020. Since the Audit Strategy Memorandum has been issued the UK has been subject to the challenges and restrictions of COVID-19. External Audit had therefore reviewed its Audit Strategy Memorandum and concluded that the original significant audit risks and other areas of management judgement remained appropriate.

One implication of COVID-19 for the Authority was that the deadlines for submission of the draft and audited financial statements were pushed back to 31 August and 30 November 2020 respectively. External Audit placed on record their thanks for the assistance of the Service in preparing the accounts and enabling them to substantially complete the audit to the original timetable.

This version of our Audit Completion Report updated an earlier version dated 10 July 2020 which was presented to the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 13 July 2020.

Subject to the satisfactory completion of the outstanding work, at the time of issuing this report External Audit had made the following conclusions:

- It anticipated issuing an unqualified opinion, without modification, on the financial statements.
- It anticipated concluding that the Authority had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Our draft auditor's report, including proposed conclusion, is provided in Appendix B.
- The NAO have not yet issued group instructions so the timing of its review of the Service's Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) submission was to be confirmed, the results of which would be recorded in the Annual Audit Letter.

Resolved - That the report be approved.

81/20 DRAFT ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019/20 - The Director of Service Improvement submitted the draft Annual Performance Report 2019/20 that incorporated detailed information covering the delivery of the Strategic Plan, a 'health check' of the Service and information relating to Service Delivery, Service Delivery Support and People & Development.

Using a set of new infographics to make it easier to display and engage with communities, the report evidence the performance achieved with the resources available. There were examples in many areas of improved performance with the same, or reduced, resources.

Members took assurance from the proactive approach to performance management and acknowledged the excellent performance data.

The full draft report details was available for viewing electronically alongside the agenda papers on the [Fire Authority's website](#).

Resolved - That the Annual Performance Report 2019/20 be approved.

82/20 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2019/20 - The Director of Service Improvement submitted the Annual Statement of Assurance 2019/20 (as set out at Appendix a of the report)

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (Revised 2018) set out a requirement for Fire and Rescue Authorities to provide annual assurance, based upon the then Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Guidance on Statements of Assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England (2013) and show they had due regard to the expectations set out in their Integrated Risk Management Plan and the requirements included in the Framework.

The areas covered were financial assurance, governance assurance and operational assurance.

Resolved - That the Annual Statement of Assurance for 2019/20, as set out at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved for publication.

83/20 DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN AND INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP) 2021-24 FOR CONSULTATION - The Director of Service Improvement submitted the draft Strategic Plan 2021/24 and revised IRMP 2021/24 prior to its eight-week period of consultation and engagement.

The current Strategic Plan was developed in 2017 as a three year forward look at the Service's objectives and priorities. The draft plan for 2021/24 had been developed along similar parameters, providing strategic focus for a three-year period, with annual reviews programmed into the Business Planning Framework. The approach being taken was detailed in the body of the report and the outline draft of the plan was included at Appendix A.

Following the first round of HMICFRS inspections and publication of the National State of Fire Report the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) commissioned a programme of work, the 'Community Risk Programme' (CRP), to develop a new framework for IRMPs primarily to address the findings of the inspectorate. Members were reminded that HMICFRS identified inconsistency in risk analysis methodology and plan content across all Fire and Rescue Services inspected and therefore the Service would be supporting the work of the CRP and look forward to the outcomes and new guidance, expected in 2021.

In the interim period, the IRMP had been subject to a detailed refresh undertaken in particular to ensure that the Authority complied with current requirements for IRMPs, detailed within the National Framework 2018, that the plan reflected current national and local/community risk profiles and that communities could take assurance from the mitigation measures the Authority had put in place.

The Authority was asked to consider this report and approve the draft Strategic Plan 2021/24 and revised IRMP 2021/24 for an eight-week period of consultation and engagement. It was hoped that the previous year's consultation response rate of 955 responses would be exceeded. In accordance with the Business Planning Framework, Members would receive the final report for approval at the December meeting of the Authority.

Members commented that the documents did not overtly portray the various ways in which the Service communicated and engaged with its communities. To highlight to Members to portfolio of engagement and communication tools used by Service's Communications team it was agreed that this would be the subject for a future Member Day. Members also stressed the need for the documents to acknowledge the disparate set of communities the Service engaged with across Humber sub-region and how engagement and communications needs would differ.

Resolved - (a) That the draft Strategic Plan 2021/24 and revised Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021/24 be approved for an eight-week period of consultation and engagement, and

(b) that a future Member Day showcases the portfolio of engagement and communication tools used by Service's Communications team in effectively communicating and engaging with the wider community.

84/20 HMICFRS UPDATE - The Director of Service Improvement provided a verbal update on the Service Improvement Plan (SIP) following the HMICFRS inspection report of the Service.

Due to COVID-19 all inspections had been suspended until further notice. In the interim HMICFRS was looking to implement a thematic assessment of all Fire & Rescue Services' response

to the Covid-19 pandemic, looking at what had gone well and lessons learned. It was expected that this inspection would be undertaken virtually, with data collection starting in late August.

Resolved - That the update be received.

85/20 COVID-19 UPDATE - The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive provided a verbal update on the Service's response to and future plans relating to COVID-19.

There was a general feeling that things were beginning to return to normal across the Service, albeit in a new way, building on the positive aspects that had come out of this period (particularly around the use of technology).

Staff were now moving back into offices to work as and when they needed to with a mix of half working from home and half working in the office.

All staff had now been issued with Service branded face coverings and positive feedback had been received from staff on COVID-19 updates issued throughout this period via a number of different outlets (ie via WhatsApp or through the Single Point of Contact [SPOC]). Self-safety had and remained the Service's focus during this period which had been well received by staff.

The Service had pre-empted the Government's announcement to increase eligibility for winter flu jab, having already planned to offer this to all Service staff this year.

The Service remained involved in the continuing development of local outbreak plans and were sighted on wider best practice nationally.

The Service continued to plan for a second spike and had been assured nationally that (being largely reliant on the nation stock pile) the purchase and distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was in place. Locally the purchase and distribution of PPE in collaboration with local authorities continued to work well.

Echoed by all Members, the Chairperson thanked staff for their continuing efforts during this period to go above and beyond what was required or expected by residents.

Resolved - That the update be received.

86/20 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.

87/20 COMPLETION OF STAFF SECONDMENTS TO THE EAST COAST AND HERTFORDSHIRE CONTROL ROOM CONSORTIUM - The Director of Service Improvement and the Director of People and Development submitted a report following the request from a staff member at Group Manager level to be considered for Early Voluntary Release (EVR) from the Service in line with the Service EVR Policy.

If approved this would assist the Service in balancing the current establishment salary budget. The staff member returning from the administrative role had expressed a wish to remain within the Service and was currently on the redeployment register in line with the Service policy on redeployment. No further decisions were required in relation to this post.

A number of options were set out for Members' consideration in relation to the Group Manager post.

Resolved - (a) That the Authority grant the individual's request for Early Voluntary Redundancy from the Service in line with the Service Early Voluntary Redundancy Policy (Option A of the report), and

(b) that the individual be thanked for their 36 years' service to the Authority.