

**HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY**  
**GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**2 NOVEMBER 2015**

**PRESENT:** Independent Co-opted Members Mr D Chapman (Chairperson), Mr M Allingham, Mrs P Jackson, Mr A Smith, Mrs M Thomlinson and Mr C Vertigans

Councillor Briggs attended as an observer.

Executive Director Service Support/Section 151 Officer, Secretary/Monitoring Officer, Director of Organisational Development, Director of Public Safety, Corporate Planning and Performance Manager, Committee Manager, Ms J Rae (External Audit – KPMG) and Mrs B Boyes (Internal Audit - MIAA) were also present.

An apology for absence was received from Mr J Doyle.

The meeting was held at the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Kingston upon Hull. Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m.

*(The Chairperson welcomed all who were observing the meeting.)*

**PROCEDURAL**

**4967 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** - No declarations were made in connection with any of the items to be considered at the meeting.

**4968 MINUTES** – The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 September 2015 were submitted. The Chairperson referred to Minute 4918 (Scrutiny Work Programme 2015/16 – Business Safety Scoping – Update) and clarified the minute by stating that there was no confusion in the minds of Members of the Committee and that the uncertainty referred to only related to the timing of the report to the Committee.

**Resolved** – (a) That the clarification with regard to Minute 4918 be noted, and

(b) that subject in the preamble to Minute 4921 (Scrutiny Work Programme 2015/16 – Business Safety Scoping – Update) to the deletion of “Mrs Tomlinson” and the substitution therefor of “Mrs Thomlinson” the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 September 2015 having been printed and circulated amongst the Members, be taken as read and correctly recorded and be signed by the Chairperson.

**4969 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES** – No items.

**GOVERNANCE**

**4970 UPDATE: MATTERS ARISING/FEEDBACK FROM FIRE AUTHORITY** – The Monitoring Officer/Secretary submitted a report summarising the consideration given by the Authority at its meeting on 25 September 2015 to the draft minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 September 2015 and also providing feedback on other items considered by the Fire Authority on 25 September and 23 October 2015. One such example being the requirement to consult with the Chairperson of the Governance Audit and Scrutiny Committee on matters that may involve GAS Committee participation.

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

**SCRUTINY PROGRAMME**

**4971 SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 2015/16 – BUSINESS SAFETY - UPDATE** – Further to Minute 4921 the Chairperson submitted a report indicating that as part of the Scrutiny Work Programme 2015/16 discussed by the Committee on 2 March 2015, it was agreed that Business Safety would be a topic for scrutiny by the Committee. Following scoping

discussions it was subsequently agreed that two aspects should be scrutinised in more detail:

- Technical fire safety
- Unwanted fire signals

The Chairman, in the absence of Mr J Doyle invited the other Members of the Sub-Group (Mrs Thomlinson, Mr Smith and Mr Vertigans) to present the scrutiny findings and recommendations in the report.

The report stated that in accordance with the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 the first of the core functions of a Fire Authority is to promote fire safety in its area:

“A fire and rescue authority must ...make arrangements for

- a) the provision of information, publicity and encouragement in respect of steps to be taken to prevent fires and death or injury by fire;
- b) the giving of advice, on request, about
  - i) how to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property;
  - ii) the means of escape from buildings and other property in case of fire.”

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service is committed to “Safer Communities, Safer Firefighters”, and no fire is a better service outcome than fire injuries minimised.

The report set out the following Scrutiny findings and recommendations:

1. Technical fire safety - Business safety inspections performance figures in the Annual Report 2014/15 were notably below target at 1925 (combined level 1 & level 2 inspections) and this was a key driver in selecting the area for scrutiny. Discussion with and information provided by the Business Safety team however revealed that this was not a fair reflection of actual performance by those present. The number of inspections was significantly affected by long-term sickness absence within the team which has and continues to be addressed. The number of inspections is quite a blunt instrument to assess performance and this is addressed further in paragraph 3 below headed Benchmarking. There are a number of improvements to service delivery in progress or planned in the short-term:
  - An up skilling of operational crews in business community safety led by one Watch Manager per Community Protection Unit. This will enable them to follow up incidents directly with a business.
  - Level 3 training will be offered to crew and watch managers which will expand the number of hours in which there is access to such knowledge. Technical fire safety expertise is not available 24/7.
  - Better use of skill mix with more level one audits being carried out by Business Safety advocates.
  - The recent move to house Business Safety staff adjacent to planning officers in Hull City Hall should prove efficient from a service delivery perspective and improve accessibility to expert advice for business community clients.
  - The team plans to implement recently released guidance from the Chief Fire Officers’ Association (CFOA) reducing the data gathering during audits on businesses meeting the requirements of the Regulatory Reform Act 2005.

CFOA (in its report “Business Fire Safety Activity – Engagement, Evaluation and audit 2015” estimates the new short audit may be appropriate in up to 70% of regulatory visits.

Members of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee attended a Business Safety seminar for small businesses put on by the team in September 2015. The presentation was well received and it was notable that a number of people then sought to speak directly to a member of the team. All four seminars were oversubscribed very quickly with approximately 200 people attending in total. It is reasonable to conclude there is unmet demand for this service.

RECOMMENDATIONS – (i) That the Authority takes assurance that the Business Safety team, supported by colleagues in the Directorate of Emergency Response, is proactive in seeking to continually improve the technical fire safety provision, work in the most effective ways and add value through partnership working, and (ii) that the Authority support the running of additional Business Safety seminars as a cost effective way of reaching a number of businesses.

2. Unwanted fire signals - In 2014/15 Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) recorded attendance at 1387 incidents categorised as False Alarm due to Apparatus at business premises. False Alarm due to Good Intent generated another 131 attendances to such premises. Undesirable consequences of unwanted fire signals include;

- Unnecessary blue light journeys (and attendant risk of injuries to firefighters and the public)
- Reduced availability for actual incidents
- Reduced availability for provision of education and training.

The financial cost is, however, only marginal (as most of the cost comes from fixed overheads). The Business Safety team interrogates data at the level of individual business premise to establish outliers. Historically, however, there has been no analysis at a level in-between. The number of unwanted fire signals has come down significantly and consistently over the last five years. This is in line with the national trend (of a 42% fall over ten years (according to the Fire Statistics Monitor: England April 2013 to March 2014). Further work on this is on-going within HFRS but at this time there are no individual businesses which stand out as a cause for concern. Scope for quick wins appears limited. There is a protocol of talking to businesses to guide them to better practice and only if that fails is there an escalation to fire safety inspection. Much of the work is carried out by Fire Safety advocates; reflecting a good use of skill mix and efficient delivery by the team. Some fire services around the UK have adopted additional approaches with a higher degree of risk to minimise responses to unwanted fire signals. Examples include;

- Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service do not respond to an automatic fire alarm between 9am – 5pm until there is a call confirming there is a fire (excludes COMAH sites & sleeping risks premises) ([www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/business-safety/reducing-false-alarms/automatic-fire-alarms-our-response/](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/business-safety/reducing-false-alarms/automatic-fire-alarms-our-response/)).
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue have adopted a call challenge protocol for commercial premises: The caller is asked whether or not they actually have a fire or signs of a fire. If not, the caller is asked to investigate the cause of the alarm and call back on 999 if there is a fire. If no further call is received the service does not attend ([www.lancsfireandrescue.org.uk/unwanted-fire-alarm-signals-policy/](http://www.lancsfireandrescue.org.uk/unwanted-fire-alarm-signals-policy/)).

HFRS currently challenge the call but will always send at least one appliance even if the answer is that a fire is not confirmed (A flowchart for dealing with calls for commercial premises received from Automatic Fire Alarms and /or 999 calls was set out in Appendix 1 to the report). Any future discussion around this approach would need to be mindful of potential impact on response outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS – (i) That the Authority consider asking the Corporate Management Team to present, at a Member Day, on the range of approaches taken nationwide to address unwanted fire signals, and (ii) that a small piece of work be carried out by the Business Safety team to review unwanted fire signals activity at the level of business type e.g. agricultural, small retail etc. to:

- Establish if there are any patterns
- Evaluate whether there may be merit in sector specific education initiatives.

3. **Benchmarking** - Whilst undertaking this scrutiny exercise it has become apparent some performance measures could be viewed as outdated and that there is further data available that could be of value to the service in determining best outcome measures. The performance measure for business safety audits is based upon the number of staff and covering all identified premises in a five year period. It is not related in a meaningful way to performance in the previous year and there is no reporting of the split between proactive visits and reactive visits (following up a complaint from the public or after an incident). It is recognised that it is hard to assess performance in preventative work. A fall in the number of incidents is at best a proxy for number of incidents prevented. Once an organisation has progressed beyond establishing a baseline position and the setting of targets, the natural progression is to benchmark performance against similar organisations. HFRS has access to data on the performance of other Fire and Rescue Services. There is an opportunity to go forward with a more meaningful measure set for a timescale more appropriate to the pace of change within the organisation.

RECOMMENDATION – That the Authority consider requesting that the Corporate Management Team specify aspirational positioning against other fire and rescue services in some of the outcome measures in the next strategic plan.

**Resolved** – That it be a recommendation to the Fire Authority that –

- (i) the Authority takes assurance that the Business Safety team, supported by colleagues in the Directorate of Emergency Response, is proactive in seeking to continually improve the technical fire safety provision, work in the most effective ways and add value through partnership working;
- (ii) the Authority support the running of additional Business Safety seminars as a cost effective way of reaching a number of businesses;
- (iii) the Authority consider asking the Corporate Management Team to present, at a Member Day, on the range of approaches taken nationwide to address unwanted fire signals;
- (iv) that a small piece of work be carried out by the Business Safety team to review unwanted fire signals activity at the level of business type e.g. agricultural, small retail etc. to:
  - Establish if there are any patterns
  - Evaluate whether there may be merit in sector specific education initiatives.
- (v) the Authority consider requesting that the Corporate Management Team specify aspirational positioning against other fire and rescue services in some of the outcome measures in the next strategic plan.

**AUDIT****EXTERNAL AUDIT (KPMG)**

**4972 Annual Audit Letter** – Further to Minute 4922 Ms J Rae, External Audit (KPMG) presented the final Annual Audit Letter in respect to the Authority's accounts for 2014/15 indicating that KPMG had issued an unqualified opinion on the Authority's 2014/15 financial statements; the Pension Fund 2014/15 financial statements included in the Authority's Statement of Accounts and that KPMG had concluded that the Authority had made proper arrangements for securing financial resilience and challenging how to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Appendix 2 to the Annual Audit Letter summarised the outturn against the 2014/15 planned audit fee. The letter had previously been submitted to the Fire Authority held on 23 October 2015 (Minute 4959 refers).

**Resolved** – That the Annual Audit Letter be noted.

**4973 External Audit Progress Report and Technical Update** – Ms J Rae (External Audit (KPMG) submitted a report providing an overview on progress in delivering KPMG's responsibilities as external auditors. At the end of each stage of the audit KPMG issued certain deliverables, including reports and opinions. A summary of progress against those deliverables was provided in Appendix 1 of the report. The report also highlighted the main technical issues that were currently having an impact in local government. The report had previously been submitted to the fire Authority on 23 October 2015 (Minute 4960 refers). Ms Rae drew Members' attention to the technical update with regard to the new local audit framework.

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

**4974 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS 2015/16 – BASED ON PERIOD ENDING 30 SEPTEMBER 2015** - The Executive Director Service Support/Section 151 Officer submitted a report containing the Authority's Management Accounts and Prudential Indicators for the period ending 30 September 2015. The summary estimated outturn position from the Management Accounts and Prudential Indicators was as follows:

- Revenue Budget - £561k underspend
- Capital Programme - £8.3m expenditure against £12.9m allocation
- Pensions Account - £11.6m deficit

The report indicated that the format of the monthly Management Accounts had been streamlined and that on a risk-based approach the Management Accounts for 2015/16 will follow the revised format, and also that the reporting cycle frequency through to the end of the financial year will be as shown in the table below:

<u>Period Ending</u>	<u>Authority Meeting</u>
31 December 2015	15 February 2016
29 February 2016	18 March 2016

A copy of the accounts for the period ending 30 September 2015 was published as additional information alongside the Agenda papers for this meeting on the Authority's website. The Executive Director Service Support/Section 151 Officer referred to the capital programme and informed Members that planning permission had recently been granted for the new fire station in Hull. The Accounts had been previously submitted to the Fire Authority on 23 October 2015 (Minute 4961 refers).

A Member queried the provision in the accounts relating to Agency Staff which was answered by the Executive Director Service Support/Section 151 Officer. A Member queried the way in which transport costs and the capital schemes at Brough and Hull were shown in the accounts which were answered by the Executive Director Service Support/Section 151

Officer and the Director of Service Support. The Chairperson suggested that if need be Members could have a separate meeting with the Executive Director Service Support/Section 151 Officer to discuss the Authority's finances in more depth. The Executive Director Service Support/Section 151 Officer confirmed that a meeting could be arranged if required.

**Resolved** – That Members take assurance from the report and the Authority's financial position for the period ending 30 September 2015.

**4975 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR UPDATE REPORT 2015/16** – The Executive Director Service Support/Section 151 Officer submitted a report providing an update on the Authority's treasury management activities for the first half of the financial year 2015/16. The report showed complete compliance with the Authority's Capital Expenditure and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and also investment returns in line with the benchmark rate of return provided by Capita Asset Services. Interest earned during the first six months of 2015/16 exceeded the budget by £23k. The Authority on 16 March 2015 had approved the annual Treasury Management Policy Statement and agreed a range of Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, aimed at ensuring effective treasury management and affordability of capital plans. The report ensured compliance with recommended practice as outlined in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIFPA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2009 by providing Members with an update on treasury management undertaken since the beginning of the financial year and highlighting key Prudential Indicator information. During the period April to September 2015, the Authority had operated wholly within the limits approved.

**Resolved** - That Members note the treasury management activities undertaken during the first half of 2015/16 and the Prudential Indicators as outlined in paragraphs 15 and 16 and detailed in Appendix 1 to the report now submitted.

#### **INTERNAL AUDIT (MIAA)**

**4976 Internal Audit Update** – Mrs Boyes (Internal Audit - MIAA) submitted a report outlining internal audit activity since the last meeting as follows:

Internal Audit Plan 2015/16 – Progress Update - The report provides a progress update of 2015/16 Internal Audit activity against the agreed plan. A summary was provided at Appendix 1 to the report which showed that the change readiness review had been reported upon following completion of the interactive workshop sessions with staff and this was attached at Appendix 2 to the report. The project governance element of the review was not fully reported upon as that work remains in progress. As such, a separate report is planned which will capture the issues around this area of current and on-going development. The interim report on change readiness at Appendix 2 offered significant assurance based upon the positive direction of travel by the Authority to engage with staff and address areas for development, notwithstanding the areas for improvement which had been identified, many of which were in progress or planned and detailed within the report. The outcomes from the workshops were also informing the scoping of other planned internal audit assignments and specifications for these were taking into account relevant workshop feedback. Appendix 1 also showed that the planned review of fees and charges (excluding HFR Solutions) was complete and a draft report was currently being discussed with officers. This report should soon be finalised enabling the Committee to receive it at the February 2016 meeting. Key issues arising included:

- The clarity and formality of the Service's approach (and culture) to levying fees and charges;
- Staff awareness of processes around income identification and raising accounts;
- Controls over periodic income.

A Member welcomed the report but sought clarification regarding the "significant assurance" which he considered was fine if that related to the process but not so if it was in respect to the outcomes as he had concerns regarding the outcomes in

respect to answers to questions 5 and 11 on page 91 of the report. The Director of Public Safety stated that the report had been discussed by the Corporate Management Team and informed Members of action that was being taken to ensure that messages from the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive are communicated directly. A Member stated that the report suggested that staff had been honest in their responses. The Chairperson stated that it was a very good report.

Follow Up of 2014/15 Recommendations - Appendix 3 to the report provided details of follow up activity in respect of combined financial systems and the operational efficiency reviews undertaken as part of the 2014/15 Internal Audit Plan and showed that all recommendations for those two reviews had been addressed. Follow-up activity was currently on-going in respect of non-allocated support vehicles and executive governance arrangements. The results of this work will be reported to the next Committee meeting.

The Chairperson referred to the on-going audit work in respect to previous recommendations regarding Business Safety and stated that he hoped that the subsequent report would take account of the scrutiny report submitted to this meeting and not result in any conflicts. Mrs Boyes stated that she was aware of the scrutiny outcomes and they would be taken into account in her on-going work.

MIAA Briefings - Appendix 4 to the report was presented for information and provided a briefing on cyber security.

**Resolved** - That the Committee notes the progress against the 2015/16 Internal Audit Plan and issues arising, and also the MIAA Briefing Paper on cyber security.

## **PERFORMANCE, RISK AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT**

**4977 Service Performance and Risk Report - 2nd Quarter Period July–September 2015** - The Corporate Planning & Performance Manager submitted a report providing information relating to the Service's Performance and Risk Framework which was highlighted in the following summary table and Appendix 1 to the report:

<b>Section 1 – Strategic Risks</b>	
Reduction in external financial support	No change in risk.
Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP)	No change in risk.
East Coast and Hertfordshire Control Room Project	No change in risk
Review and Development of Protective Security	No change in risk
<b>Section 2 – Prevention Performance</b>	
Accidental Dwelling Fires	21.5% under 3 year average.
Other Accidental Fires (exc. Vehicles)	10.9% over 3 year average.
Deliberate Primary Fires	7.3% over 3 year average.
Deliberate Secondary Fires	0.2% over 3 year average.
Number of Automatic Fire Alarms	10.7% under 3 year average.
Fatalities	1 fatality (aspirational target 0)
Injuries	13 injuries (aspirational target 0)
<b>Section 3 – Response Performance</b>	
First engine response	7.61% better than target
Second engine response	12.49% better than target
<b>Section 4 – Projects Update</b>	
Key projects are reported in this section	All on track except ARK

Section 5 – Absence Statistics	
Key data is reported in this section	There has been a minor increase for Wholetime, Retained, and Control. There has been a drop in non-operational sickness.

A Member suggested that it would be helpful if comparative statistics regarding the number of call-outs could be incorporated within the data contained in Appendix 1 to the report. The Corporate Planning & Performance Manager stated that the information was included in the annual report but that details could be included within future quarterly reports. A Member sought clarification of the data in Appendix 1 to the report regarding Medical Interventions which was answered by the Corporate Planning & Performance Manager. A Member referred to the sickness absence data and suggested that it would be helpful if the data could include a comparison with the previous year. The Corporate Planning & Performance Manager reminded Members that that detail was included in the annual report.

**Resolved** – That the Committee takes assurance as to the Service’s proactive approach to performance and risk management.

**4978 Health, Safety and Environmental Report - 2nd Quarter Period July–September 2015** - The Director of Service Support submitted a report providing information with regard to Health, Safety and Environmental outcomes for the 2nd Quarter Period July – September 2015. During this period there had been 23 incidents recorded that resulted in some sort of injury which was a significant decrease on the same period last year (36 incidents) and the last quarter (38 incidents). Again training would appear to be the main contributing activity with 10 incidents being reported, however, 7 of those events related directly to water rescue training which also accounted for an increase in injury/accident type relating specifically to ‘hitting something fixed or stationary’. On-going liaison with the Training Section to mitigate such events wherever possible continued. The 2nd quarter is when the majority of the Services water rescue training is undertaken. During this period 3 RIDDOR events were reported, an increase of 2 on the last quarter and 1 more than the same period last year. As a result of the events reported, including one of the RIDDOR events cited, an underlying issue with the stowage of breathing apparatus has since been resolved. The 3rd event listed in the report is currently under investigation. A significant rise in the number of vehicle collisions was attributed to staff being actively encouraged to report all incidents involving vehicles. With this in mind a number of the events cited could be seen to be minor in nature. The Service was also pleased to confirm that Philip Smith had received an invitation to speak at the next Inside Government conference in London on ‘Delivering an Award Winning Health and Safety Management Approach to the Fire and Rescue Service’, building on the achievement last quarter in attaining the Industry Sector Silver Award from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. A snap-shot of the quarter was attached in Appendix 1 to the report and the full detailed report was attached in Appendix 2.

A Member queried how the achievement of Mr Smith being invited to address the Inside Government conference would be communicated to staff which was answered by the Director of Service Support.

**Resolved** – That the Committee notes the report and takes assurance as to the Service’s proactive approach to Health, Safety and Environmental outcomes.

**4979 INSPECTION OF MEMBER REGISTERS** – The Member Registers of Interests and Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality were made available for inspection by any Member of the Committee as part of their monitoring role.

**4980 INSPECTION OF OFFICER REGISTERS** – The Officer Registers of Interests and Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality were made available for inspection by any Member of the Committee as part of their monitoring role.

**4981 ANY OTHER BUSINESS** – The following matters were briefly discussed:

- HFR Solutions – A Member queried whether there was a mechanism for Directors of HFR Solutions who were also Members of the Authority could report to the Fire Authority. The Secretary/Monitoring Officer stated that the normal arrangement was for the Board to report to the Authority on an annual basis.
- Scrutiny Work Programme 2015/16 – The Chairperson stated that it was appropriate to consider further matters for scrutiny to be undertaken by the Committee and invited the Fire Authority/Corporate Management Team to put forward any suggestions. The GAS Committee may also suggest topics for consideration.

*Meeting closed at 11.21 a.m.*

