

Report of Chair of Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee met on the 11th June 2013 and 7 members attended. The committee re-elected David Hughes as Chair for a further year. In recognition of the number of GAS and HFA meetings in the year it was felt that there should be a vice chair to stand in when required. Doug Chapman was nominated for this role. There is no vice chair role in the constitution but we propose to the HFA that the constitution be changed. This will help with a seamless change at the end of this year's committee chair appointment, and preclude the need to have a discussion at each meeting on who should Chair the meeting when the Chair is unavailable. An allowance would not be sought, although it was understood the scheme for allowances would be reviews during 2013/14.

The Committee reviewed a number of the papers that are being presented to the Fire Authority on the 24th June and this paper summarises the salient points. My report should be read in conjunction with the draft minutes of the Committee.

Governance, Audit & Scrutiny Committee Report

As members are aware the Committee was proposed in the Third Governance Review and last year it was appointed in October 2012. At a previous HFA meeting it was agreed that the committee members be appointed for a further year. We appreciate that the concept of an independently appointed GAS Committee is unique, and some of the current HFA were not part of the third review. We believe however that it would be beneficial if the newer GAS Committee members had a longer tenure than one year, and that it is a phased appointment so that there is continuity from one year to the next. Their letter of appointment said 'As you know, this is a new appointment and will be reviewed in due course, in tandem with the annual review of the effectiveness of the governance arrangements of the Fire Authority. The initial appointment is to the end of April 2013, subject to the review mentioned. I anticipate three or four year terms thereafter'.

The Committee fully understands that this is an Authority decision and the Authority has said that it wishes to carry out a further review in April 2014.

Internal Audit Report

Members will be aware that routine internal audit reports are not routinely presented at the HFA meetings. The GAS Committee has the responsibility of bringing to the HFA any issues they consider important. There were a number of findings in this month's report that related to procedures this item is already on our work stream for this year following a comment made at a previous HFA meeting. Also there were two audit items that are outstanding from the previous years audit reports (2011/12). It was proposed that when this happens consideration should be given to increasing the categorisation of the audit findings which is common practice in other organisations. It was felt by the officers that this delay in implementation of the previous years finding, could be attributed to a high work load by the Fire Service employees.

Operational Efficiency Programme

This item was not discussed in detail as part of the meeting due to time constraints but was covered in a presentation later in the day. The presentation covered the development of the options, the source and quality of the input data and hence the validity of the conclusions regarding response times and any changes to risk. This was a similar presentation to the one given to Elected Members at a previous Members day. In a recent HFA minute there is a comment from a member regarding an "assurance" given at a Member's day regarding one of the options, which is a concern from a GAS committee perspective as not all members attend every meeting the meetings are not recorded.

HFR Solutions

The committee noted that the company continues to perform well. We would recommend that the two Elected Members to be appointed to the board are not elected as directors for the reasons outlined by the Director of People. What is a concern to us is that after a year there is no business plan, although one has been promised.

DGH 7/13

