



Minutes of a meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland CFA - Corporate Governance Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 13 July 2023.

PRESENT

Mr. R. G. Allen CC	Mr. K. Ghattoraya CC
Mr. N. D. Bannister CC	Mr. D. J. Grimley CC
Cllr. Hemant Rae Bhatia	Cllr. S. Harvey
Mr. D. A. Gamble CC	Ms. Betty Newton CC

In attendance

Callum Faint, Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
 Paul Weston, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
 Judi Beresford, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
 Amy Oliver, Treasurer
 Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer
 Neil Jones, Head of Internal Audit Services, Leicestershire County Council
 Matt Davis, Audit Manager, Leicestershire County Council
 Manjora Bisla, Finance Manager, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service
 Matt Cane, Area Manager Response
 Gemma Duckworth, Senior Democratic Services Officer

27. Appointment of Chairman.

It was moved by Mr N Bannister CC and seconded by Mr D Grimley CC that Mr R Allen CC be appointed Chairman of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the CFA in 2024.

RESOLVED:

That Mr R Allen CC be appointed Chairman of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the CFA in 2024.

Mr R Allen CC in the Chair

28. Election of Vice Chairman.

The Chairman sought nominations for the position of Vice Chairman of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee.

It was moved by Mr Allen CC and seconded by Councillor S Harvey that Mrs. M. E. Newton CC be appointed Vice Chairman of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the CFA in 2024. There being no other nominations, the Chairman declared Mrs. M. E. Newton CC be appointed Vice Chairman of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Mrs. M. E. Newton CC be appointed Vice Chairman of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the CFA in 2024.

29. Apologies for absence.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S Barton.

30. Declarations of Interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare an interest in respect of items on the agenda.

No declarations were made.

31. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items.

32. Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman made his announcements which covered the following matters:

- Paragon Fire, Wigston
- Supervisory Management Development Courses
- Networking Women in the Fire Service

33. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

34. External Audit Strategy Memorandum 2022/23.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer which presented the Audit Strategy Memorandum for the year ended 31 March 2023. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes. The CFA's external auditor, Mazars LLP, gave a brief presentation on the findings within the Audit Strategy Memorandum.

The audit was presently expected to complete by the end of November 2023, allowing for the separate completion of the audit of the Leicestershire Local Government Pension Scheme accounts. The CFA would then be asked to approve the audited accounts at the next available meeting.

Mazars had proposed an audit fee of £35,178 – this was in line with 2021/22 fees and the national position.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Allen CC and seconded by Mr Bannister CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the External Audit Strategy Memorandum for the year ended 31 March 2023 be noted.

35. After the Incident Survey Annual Report 2022/23.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which presented the outcomes of the After the Incident Survey 2022/23. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were raised:

- i) Overall, there was a very high degree of satisfaction with the Service. There was an aspiration for a higher response rate, although the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer acknowledged that officers understood why people did not wish to complete the survey. It was suggested that there could be a higher response rate if comments were asked for once a greater period of time had elapsed after an incident. However, assurance was given that where there had been a significant incident, for example a house fire, officers would return to speak to those involved at a later date.
- ii) In response to a query around whether there were any themes in the negative comments, the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer stated that the main issue related to excessive waiting times, but attendance times in getting to an incident was a known issue. There did not appear to be any obvious themes, but the Service continued to listen and learn from any comments received.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Allen CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the summary findings be noted.

36. Performance Monitoring April 2022 to March 2023 and April to May 2023.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which presented an update on the performance of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the period April 2022 to March 2023 and April to May 2023. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) Attention was drawn to the performance of LFRS against other Fire and Rescue Services. It was noted that in many categories, LFRS had improved its performance when compared against the 'three-year' change figures, despite the challenging weather during the summer and the increased incident and call volumes last year.
- ii) There had been an increase in the number of special service incidents attended. Road traffic collisions were at slightly higher levels compared to previous years and more suicide and suicide attempt incidents were being attended than ever before. The Service now had a greater provision of support to officers attending these incidents.

- iii) Attendance times at life risk incidents were exceeding the set target. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer acknowledged that the target (which was set by the Service itself) was very challenging and it was possible that this would need to be reconsidered in the next CRMP. A significant factor was the rural location of some of the incidents, which meant that it took longer for officers to arrive.
- iv) A query was raised around the number of malicious false fire alarm incidents. There had been an increase in the first two months of 2023/24, although it was noted that the numbers were relatively low. There was currently no identifiable trend but this would continue to be monitored. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer gave assurance that every malicious call received would be traced and action taken where possible.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Allen CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the performance of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the period April 2022 to March 2023 and April to May 2023 be noted.

37. Service Development Programme and 'Our Plan 2020-24' - Appendix A Tasks.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which presented the progress made since March 2023 in the delivery of projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks included in Appendix A of Our Plan 2020-24. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were raised:

- i) It was reported that the refurbishment of Western Station had now been completed and this would be the blueprint for future station refurbishments across Leicestershire. Arrangements were being made for members of the CFA to visit the station.
- ii) There had been an increased number of fire safety audits and home safety checks. The right people were being targeted through referral from partner organisations.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Allen CC and seconded by Councillor Harvey. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made since March 2023 in the delivery of projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks that are included in Our Plan 2020-24 be noted.

38. Draft Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement 2022/23.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer which presented the draft Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 before they were submitted

to the CFA for formal approval following the external audit. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

The draft accounts were subject to ongoing review by Mazars before they conclude their audit opinion and Value for Money assessment. However, the accounts audit work could not be completed until the Leicestershire County Council Pension Fund had been audited. It was unlikely that this would be completed by 30 September 2023 which would impact the conclusion of the CFA audit. Mazars was aiming to complete the audit by the end of November. Assurance was given that this was a national issue and there would be no penalty for missing the deadline.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Allen CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23, which may be subject to amendment following the external audit, be noted.

39. Progress Against the Internal Audit Plan 2022/23.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer which gave an update of progress against the Internal Audit Plans for 2022/23 and 2023/24. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

In respect of the 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan, of the 14 individual pieces of work, all three prior year reports had been completed, ten 2022/23 financial year audits had been finalised and one audit had been agreed to be deferred into the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan. Three legacy partial assurance reports containing high importance recommendations remained in the Committee's domain and a further update would be presented to the next meeting.

With regard to 2023/24, of the 18 individual pieces of work, eight prior year reports had been completed, three current year audits were at draft report stage, five were at various stages of work in progress, one current year audit had not yet started, and one was likely to be deferred with a replacement audit currently being discussed.

The recommendations contained within the report were moved by Mr Allen CC and seconded by Mr Bannister CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted, in particular that:

- a) All audits due to be completed within the financial year 2022/23 have now been finalised;
- b) Three other legacy partial assurance report ratings containing high importance recommendations remain outstanding and this has been reflected in the Head of Internal Audit Services Opinion;
- c) Work is ongoing with the Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer – Service Support – to bring more timely resolutions to these outstanding concerns;
- d) Work is progressing well with the 2023/24 audit plan; and

- e) The audit related to Learning and Development (24/10) in the 2023/24 Plan has been deferred and will be replaced with an alternative audit of the Risk Based Inspection Programme.

40. Head of Internal Audit Services Annual Report 2022/23.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer which provided the opportunity to review the Head of Internal Audit Service Annual Report for 2022/23. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 14' is filed with these minutes.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Allen CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Head of Internal Audit Service Annual Report 2022/23 be noted.

41. Procurement and Waivers Annual Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which provided details of procurement related activity and compliance for the financial year 2022/23. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 15' is filed with these minutes.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Allen CC and seconded by Mr Grimley CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the summary of procurement activity in 2022/23, as required by Rule 19.2 of the Contracts Procedure Rules 2018, be noted.

42. Staff Engagement and Culture Survey - Action Plan.

The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer – Service Support – on the Staff Engagement and Culture Survey – Action Plan. A copy of the presentation is filed with these minutes.

A cultural survey of the Service had been undertaken in October 2022 and although the findings had been generally positive, the Service was not complacent and had sought to undertake further work. There were some short term actions and mid/long term plans:

- To develop communications, including engagement
- Leadership and Management development programmes
- To review and improve processes, including around promotions
- To update the current people related policies and procedures
- To undertake a review of culture and develop a single 'Service Plan'.

A range of work was already underway around communication and staff engagement, the Leadership development programme, holding focus groups, reviewing current promotion success, commissioning an independent review of culture in the Service, seeking independent advice and guidance to redesign processes, and the procurement of an external confidential reporting line.

A member commented that frontline officers could often feel remote from management. In response to a query about improving this, the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer reported that 'back to the floor days' had been restarted, where senior management visited fire stations and officers had the opportunity to raise any issues. As a commitment to engagement, a scheme had also been launched which gave operational staff the chance to shadow the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer for a day.

In order to fully embed the recommendations from the survey and Spotlight report, a formal action plan would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

The recommendation to note the presentation was moved by Mr Allen CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

43. Sickness Analysis April 2022 to March 2023.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer on sickness analysis for Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the period April 2022 to March 2023. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 17' is filed with these minutes.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Allen CC and seconded by Councillor Harvey. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the sickness analysis for the period April 2022 to March 2023 be noted.

44. Governance Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer which provided an update and assurance on governance and ethical issues. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 18' is filed with these minutes.

Attention was drawn to Appendix B of the report – Politically Restricted Posts. It was noted that there had been some personnel changes to the list which had been circulated:

Area Manager Community Risk – Ben Bee
 Area Manager Service Assurance (temporary) – Chris Moir
 Area Manager People and Organisational Development – Karl Bowden

The constitution would be updated to reflect these changes.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted future arrangements, in particular in relation to local audit requirements. The Government was encouraging Fire and Rescue Authorities to establish arrangements in line with CIPFA's Audit Committees to include co-opted independent members, although this had not yet been mandated. Both Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council had recently recruited independent members to sit on each of their respective committees with audit functions.

The options available to the CFA were:

- a) To identify if two (one from each local authority) of the independent members appointed by Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council would be willing and available to sit on the CFA Corporate Governance Committee in rotation;
- b) To undertake a separate recruitment exercise to appoint independent members;
- c) To await the introduction of the legislation to mandate the appointment of independent members.

The Committee agreed that Option A was preferred and the Monitoring Officer would contact the independent members appointed by Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council. It would be necessary to amend the constitution to revise the Terms of Reference for this Committee to allow the Independent Member appointment.

The recommendations contained within the report were moved by Mr Allen CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The update provided on governance and ethical issues be noted;
- b) The Committee confirms it wishes to appoint independent members of the Committee from those already appointed by Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council (option A);
- c) The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy be approved and the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make any minor amendments to the Policy as may be required following consultation with the recognised Trade Unions; and
- d) The CFA be asked to approve the changes to the Constitution which flow from the adoption of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy.

45. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the CFA Corporate Governance Committee will be held on 20 September 2023 at 2.00pm.

10.00 - 11.55 am
13 July 2023

CHAIRMAN