



Minutes of a meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland CFA - Corporate Governance Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 20 November 2024.

PRESENT

Mr. R. Allen CC (in the Chair)

Cllr. S. Barton

Mr. K. Ghattoraya CC

Mr. D. Grimley CC

Ms. Betty Newton CC

Mr. D. Harrison CC

Cllr. S. Harvey

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

Collette Sutton, Head of Corporate Financial Services

Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer

Neil Jones, Head of Internal Audit Service, Leicestershire County Council

Matt Davis, Audit Manager, Leicestershire County Council

Bipon Bhakri, Independent Member

Gemma Duckworth, Senior Democratic Services Officer

114. Apologies for absence.

An apology was received from Mr Alec Maxfield.

115. 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.

116. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items.

117. Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman made his announcements, which covered the following:

- Recent incidents
- HMICFRS Inspection
- Mobilising System

The Committee congratulated staff on the successful transfer to the new mobilising system.

118. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2024.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2024 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

Councillor Harvey wished it to be noted that she had abstained from voting on the confirmation of the minutes.

119. Financial Monitoring to the end of September 2024.

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Financial Services which presented the financial monitoring for the six months to the end of September 2024, along with the key issues arising from the revenue budget and capital programme as at 30 September 2024. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 6' is filed with these minutes.

For the 12 months to 31 March 2025, the revenue position currently showed an overall forecast underspend of £221,000. The forecast position reflected the pressures being faced as a consequence of general inflation, recent pay awards and a new scheme of on-call payments that commenced on 1 January 2025.

The capital programme was reporting expenditure at the end of September of £2,450,000. Forecast expenditure for the year was £7,425,000, which would result in an underspend of £1,455,000. The two largest items in the programme were forecast to spend £1,500,000 for the completion of the Eastern Station refurbishment and £1,600,000 for the new Learning and Development facility at Billesdon.

In response to a query around whether the budgets set were realistic, assurance was given that the Treasurer role was now in-house and budgets were being scrutinised to ensure they were more robust. Additional staff had been put in post to manage the budget more closely. However, the Chief Fire Officer stated that there was always a degree of uncertainty when setting the budget due to waiting for announcements around how much funding the FRS would receive.

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 revenue budget and capital programme position as at the end of September 2024 be noted.

120. Revenue Budget Process 2025/26.

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Financial Services which addressed the current position of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the planned approach to the budget setting process for 2025/26 through to 2027/28. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes.

An indicative 2025/26 budget had been set out in the February 2024 MTFP, with a forecast gap of £0.2m. This would now be updated for current known funding, pressures, any growth items and savings. The work was underway, draft figures would be

discussed with officers and elected members and the final MTFP 2025/26 would be presented to the CFA in February 2025.

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

RESOLVED:

That the report and proposed approach to updating the Medium-Term Financial Plan be noted.

121. Service Development Programme and 'CRMP 2024-2028' Actions.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which presented the progress made since September 2024 in the delivery of projects within the Service Development Programme and the actions included in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2024-2028. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

Progress had been reported in respect of ten projects that were currently in various stages of development. Progress against the 29 actions that had been identified within the Service Strategies in the CRMP was also highlighted.

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 progress made since September 2024 in the delivery of projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks that are included in the CRMP 2024-2028 be noted.

122. Performance Monitoring April to September 2024.

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 2024 to September 2024. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) There had been a significant increase in the total number of incidents attended. However, in terms of fire incidents, there had been a decrease due to the wet weather. There had been a slight increase in the number of fire false alarm incidents and this would continue to be monitored.
- ii) Due to the very good call handling, only 50% of calls had required mobilisation. Consideration was currently being given to instigating a new process for mobilisation to fire alarms; public consultation was being undertaken on this and a report on the outcome would be presented to a future meeting of the CFA. There was a possibility that businesses could be charged for attendance as a result of a fire alarm.

- iii) The increase in non-fire incidents had been lower than expected over the period. Following a review, it had been agreed that there was a requirement for the FRS to attend incidents but this would continue to be monitored.
- iv) It was noted that there had been two fire fatalities in September and these were both currently being investigated. Non-fire fatalities continued to increase, but assurance was given that good support was in place for crews who attended these incidents. The number of officers seeking TRIM support had decreased; it was stated that this would now be provided to staff by default with the option to opt-out of the support should it not be required.
- v) It was pleasing to note that there had been improvements in all areas of KCI3 (Level of emergency response service provision) and it was anticipated that the average call handling time would decrease with the introduction of the new system. In terms of the percentage availability of On-Call fire appliances (KCI 3.6), LFRS was quite a way from its target. It was noted that there was a Home Office funded project to assess the achievability of this.
- vi) Improvements continued in the number of home safety checks undertaken, and last year, LFRS had rates the eighth best Service in the country.
- vii) It was encouraging to note that, with regard to Fire Protection and Enforcement (KCI 5), the number of fire safety audits undertaken suggested that the right businesses were being targeted.
- viii) In terms of KCI 6 (capacity, staff and availability), LFRS had been the second best FRA for the last full year. However, this related mainly to operational staff, with sickness amongst professional staff remaining high. Those returning to work had been managed well, although it was noted with concern that the professional service was stretched and there was little budget to employ additional staff.
- ix) In response to a query around trends for sickness, the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer stated that the majority related to musculo-skeletal injuries. There was a trend in relation to mental health issues and assurance was given that a number of mechanisms were in place to assist staff in returning to work.

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

RESOLVED:

That the performance of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the period April 2024 to September 2024 be noted.

123. Progress against the Internal Audit Plan 2024/25.

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Financial Services which provided an update of progress against the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25 and information on two consultations on proposed changes to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

There had been eleven potential auditable areas within the approved 2024/25 Internal Audit Plan. Of these, two had been completed to final report stage, one had been completed to draft report stage, seven were at various stages of work in progress and one audit had not yet started. A detailed analysis of time recorded against planned audits had identified some variances which could affect the overall plan performance; this was due to significant staff changes at the FRS and time taken to address High Importance recommendations. However, more resourcing to complete the work had now been approved.

In relation to the Accounts Receivables – BACS Payment Process, it was reported that this had now successfully been tested in a live environment and it was now deemed that the revised controls were robust enough to mitigate the risk to an acceptable level.

In relation to the two consultation exercises, the Head of Internal Audit Services would advise the Committee on the outcome and next stages at its next meeting.

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 the report be noted and that:

- a) One legacy partial assurance report (relating to contract procedure rules) containing high importance recommendations currently remains outstanding. This continues to be retested as part of the 2024/25 coverage;
- b) Following testing in a live environment, the legacy partial assurance report relating to bank account changes be deemed to be robust enough to mitigate the risk to an acceptable level;
- c) Whilst work is progressing well with the 2024/25 audit plan, and it remains at the stage anticipated for this time of year, a review of time incurred so far necessitates a discussion with the Treasurer and Monitoring Officer on whether some re-prioritisation is required; and
- d) Work will be required by the Head of Internal Audit Service to implement the revised internal audit standards.

124. Contract Procedure Rules.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which provided an update on the actions taken and the progress made in preparing the Fire and Rescue Service for the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

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

RESOLVED:

- a) That the progress made in preparing for the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023 be noted;

- b) That the delivery of mandatory training to ensure all staff understand their responsibilities under the new Act be supported;
- c) That the continued review and alignment of procurement policies with the Act's requirements be endorsed.

125. Review and Revision of the Constitution of the Combined Fire Authority.

The Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer seeking approval for the submission of the revised CFA Constitution to the Combined Fire Authority for approval at its meeting on 10 December 2024. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

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

RESOLVED:

That the changes to the Constitution detailed in the Appendix to the report be approved, for submission to the Combined Fire Authority for approval at its meeting on 10 December 2024.

126. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the CFA Corporate Governance Committee will be held on 12 March 2025 at 2.00pm.

2.00 - 3.30 pm
20 November 2024

CHAIRMAN