

Minutes of a meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland CFA - Corporate Governance Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 24 November 2021.

PRESENT

Cllr. K. Bool (in the Chair)

Mr. N. D. Bannister CC
Mr. S. L. Bray CC
Cllr. L. Fonseca
Mr. K. Ghattoraya CC

Mr. R. Hills CC
Mr. B. Lovegrove CC
Ms. Betty Newton CC
Cllr. M. Valand

In attendance

Callum Faint, Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer
Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director of Finance, Leicester City Council
Paul Weston, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Karl Bowden, Interim Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Neil Jones, Head of Internal Audit and Assurance Service, Leicestershire County Council
Matt Davis, Audit Manager, Leicestershire County Council
Gemma Duckworth, Democratic Services Officer

29. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Mr. J. T. Orson JP CC.

30. Declarations of interests.

It was noted that all members of the Committee would have a personal interest in agenda item 14 – Review of the Members’ Allowance Scheme - Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel as they were all eligible to receive allowances.

No further declarations were made.

31. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items.

32. Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman’s Announcements were tabled at the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. The announcements covered the following matters:

- The Chief’s Challenge
- Whole-time recruitment campaign
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Event

The Committee commended all officers involved in the Chief’s Challenge and the Equality Officer for arranging a successful Equality, Diversity and Inclusion event.

33. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2021 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

34. Performance Monitoring April - September 2021.

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 (LFRS) for the period April to September 2021. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 6', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) There had been an increase in the number of requests to support EMAS due to the pressures on the ambulance service at the current time. Although the FRS was happy to support these requests, it was recognised that the increase was likely to impact on the availability of the FRS. Additionally, there had been an increase in requests to assist other services, mostly entering property, which could present traumatic circumstances for firefighters. Members were reassured that the Trauma Risk Management system was used to address the potential impact of these incidents on firefighters' mental health.
- ii) Performance against Attendance Times (KCI 3) was still below target, and officers were focussing on addressing this. Call handling times were also below target due to the mobilising system used. A new one would be available in December.
- iii) Operational availability (KCI 3.5 and 3.6), had now improved to an acceptable level since the Summer when the 'pingdemic' and the number of vacancies in the Service had adversely affected availability.

Members were informed that the National Fire Statistics for 2021 showed that LFRS was now the 10th best performing FRS for Home Fire Safety Checks (KCI 4) and Fire Protection and Enforcement (KCI 5), exceeded only by the larger and more highly funded FRS. The Committee commended the work of the Service in achieving this.

In response to questions, the CFO agreed to include additional data in the performance report, on an annual basis, which compared performance with other similar FRS.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Mr Bray CC that the performance of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the period April to September 2021 be noted.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the performance of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the period April to September 2021 be noted.

35. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Improvement Plan.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning progress made with the implementation of the Improvement Plan developed in response

to the inspection carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that dramatic improvements had been made since the first inspection in readiness for the inspection in 2022. More staff development, coaching and mentoring was in place to address the 'people' issues raised within the inspection, but it took time for the benefits of that to be seen within the organisation.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Councillor Valand that the progress made with the HMICFRS Improvement Plan, be noted.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made with the HMICFRS Improvement Plan, be noted.

36. Financial Monitoring to the end of September 2021.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer presenting the key issues arising from the revenue budget and capital programme as at the end of September 2021 (Financial Period 6 in 2021/22). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions, members were informed that Forge Health Ltd, owned by the Fire Authority, was a company providing occupational health services. This was used by LFRS and also the wider marketplace, although this had not been as active over the last couple of years and was not expected to return a dividend in the current financial year. A new manager had been appointed, and a new strategy for the company would be developed. The CFO added that the use of Forge Health by LFRS reduced the cost to the Fire Authority, as otherwise occupational health services would need to be purchased elsewhere.

Following recruitment, the finance team was now fully resourced, and the outcome of a more detailed review of the smaller budget lines would be included in the reports that were presented to the Committee in future.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Councillor Fonseca that

- a. the revenue budget and capital programme position as at the end of September 2021, be noted; and
- b. that it be noted that proposals from the CFO to fund priority development and improvement initiatives from the in-year underspend were presented elsewhere on the agenda.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That

- a. the revenue budget and capital programme position as at the end of September 2021, be noted; and
- b. that it be noted that proposals from the CFO to fund priority development and improvement initiatives from the in-year underspend were presented elsewhere on the agenda.

37. Usage of in-year underspend.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the proposed use of in-year underspends identified in the current year and seeking approval to utilise these for specific projects detailed in Table 1 of the report. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that the project 'Staff Recognition' would be an event for staff to recognise hard work and achievement during the pandemic; it did not relate to financial reward.

Members were pleased to see that the proposals included a balanced range of initiatives which related to staff issues, developed in response to feedback received from staff.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Mr. Hills CC that

- a. the improved working which has identified that in-year underspends of circa £600,000 could be released, be noted;
- b. the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer's decision regarding the usage of the identified underspend (as specified in Table 1) to bring about positive business improvements, with the resulting budget adjustments being within the approved Scheme of Virement, be supported; and
- c. the addition of £190,000 to the capital programme for the purchase of a Variable Response Vehicle, be approved.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That

- a. the improved working which has identified that in-year underspends of circa £600,000 could be released, be noted;
- b. the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer's decision regarding the usage of the identified underspend (as specified in Table 1) to bring about positive business improvements, with the resulting budget adjustments being within the approved Scheme of Virement, be supported; and

- c. the addition of £190,000 to the capital programme for the purchase of a Variable Response Vehicle, be approved.

38. Service Development Programme and 'Our Plan 2020-24' Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning progress made since September 2021 in delivering 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 10', is filed with these minutes.

In presenting the report, members were informed that:

- i) For the appliance replacement project, eight appliances were now in service and operational. Old appliances would be decommissioned and sold.
- ii) The Learning Management System (Oracle) project had experienced a number of issues during the roll-out phase. These would be addressed and focussed support for staff put in place to enable effective use of the system.
- iii) The Fleet Replacement Project had been delayed due to the pandemic, with delays experienced with the manufacturers. It was hoped that delivery would be made in a few weeks.
- iv) In collaboration with other blue light services, events had been held to give fire protection advice to businesses. An event held at City Hall had 115 business owners attending. It was planned that this would be expanded across districts by the end of the financial year.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Mr. Ghattoraya CC that the progress made since September 2021 in the delivery of projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks that are included in Our Plan 2020-24 be noted.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made since 2021 in the delivery of projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks that are included in Our Plan 2020-24 be noted.

39. Progress against the Internal Audit Plan 2021/22.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer concerning the progress made in delivering the Internal Audit Plan 2021–22. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11', is filed with these minutes.

In presenting the report, the internal auditor informed members that he was happy with progress made against the Internal Audit Plan, recognising that the work against the two High Importance legacy recommendations needed to be finalised as soon as possible.

Where a partial assurance rating had been given for the full audit on an area being tested, this would not necessarily be removed should an area within the audit be cleared. In this case, the uncompleted audit would continue with the partial assurance rating, and this would be picked up again the following year.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Mr. Hills CC that the progress made against the Internal Audit Plan 2021-22 be noted, particularly that:

- a) Three audits were completed (one of which was from the previous year); and
- b) Two other legacy partial assurance ratings remained but there were no other partial assurance ratings in the current financial year to date.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made against the Internal Audit Plan 2021-22 be noted, particularly that:

- a) Three audits were completed (one of which was from the previous year); and
- b) Two other legacy partial assurance ratings remained but there were no other partial assurance ratings in the current financial year to date.

40. National Scheme for Auditor Appointments managed by the Public Sector Auditor Appointments Ltd.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer concerning proposals for appointing the external auditor to the CFA for the five-year period from 2023/24 to 2027/28. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Councillor Valand that the Combined Fire Authority be recommended to accept the invitation from Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023 until 31 March 2028.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Combined Fire Authority be recommended to accept the invitation from Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023 until 31 March 2028.

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

The Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer concerning the review and revision of the Constitution. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Mr. Lovegrove CC that the changes to the Constitution, detailed in the Appendix to the report, be approved for submission to the CFA for approval at its meeting on 2 December 2021.

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 CFA for approval at its meeting on 2 December 2021.

42. Review of the Member Allowances Scheme - Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer concerning the review of the Members' Allowance Scheme. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 14' is filed with these minutes.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Mrs. Newton CC that

- a) the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel established to review the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme (appended to the report), be noted; and
- b) That the CFA be recommended to accept the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, namely:
 - i. That the arrangement for indexation of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme to the NJC Employee (Support Staff) Pay Award continues until 2023 applied on an annual basis on 1 April each year, effective from 1 April 2021 until 2023; and
 - ii. That a full review of the CFA Members' Allowance Scheme be undertaken in 2023 and that this includes a review of the matters prescribed by the Regulations at that point which is likely to include:
 - (i) Members' allowances rates and the arrangement for indexation;
 - (ii) Roles which should receive the Special Responsibility Allowances;
 - (iii) Travel and Subsistence Allowances; and
 - (iv) Independent Members' Allowances.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That

- a) the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel established to review the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme (appended to the report), be noted; and
- b) That the CFA be recommended to accept the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, namely:
 - i. That the arrangement for indexation of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme to the NJC Employee (Support Staff) Pay Award continues until 2023 applied on an annual basis on 1 April each year, effective from 1 April 2021 until 2023; and

ii. That a full review of the CFA Members' Allowance Scheme be undertaken in 2023 and that this includes a review of the matters prescribed by the Regulations at that point which is likely to include:

- (i) Members' allowances rates and the arrangement for indexation;
- (ii) Roles which should receive the Special Responsibility Allowances;
- (iii) Travel and Subsistence Allowances; and
- (iv) Independent Members' Allowances.

43. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee will be held on Wednesday 9 March 2022 at 2pm.

2.00 - 3.13 pm
24 November 2021

CHAIRMAN