



Minutes of a meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland CFA - Corporate Governance Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 15 March 2023.

PRESENT

Ms. Betty Newton CC (in the Chair)

Mr. N. D. Bannister CC

Cllr. S. Barton

Mr. K. Ghattoraya CC

Mr. R. Hills CC

Mr. J. T. Orson CC

In attendance

Gavin Barker, Mazars

Judi Beresford, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Matt Davis, Audit Manager, Leicestershire County Council

Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer

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

Colin Sharpe, representing the Treasurer

Paul Weston, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

12. Apologies for absence.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor K Bool.

13. 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.

14. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items.

15. Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman made her announcements which covered the following matters:

- Deployment of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Firefighters
- Turn Table Ladder
- Pay Offer for Firefighters.

It was noted that the team of four firefighters who had been deployed to Turkey as part of the International Search and Rescue Team had been invited to attend the forthcoming Excellence Awards, where they would be awarded a Chief's Commendation.

A request had been made to Leicester City Council for the four firefighters to be nominated for the Honoured Citizen Award Scheme and consideration would be given to a similar award within Leicestershire County Council.

16. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

17. Performance Monitoring April 2022 - January 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 (LFRS) for the period April 2022 to January 2023. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 6' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) Analysis had been undertaken on the average response time to incidents, and these had been broken down into fires and road traffic collisions (RTCs). The overall time had been impacted by RTCs due to their locations; these tended to occur on more rural roads which had a significantly longer drive time from the nearest fire station. Consideration had been given as to whether the fire stations were in appropriate locations to meet the attendance time based upon the risk and incident profile, but if these were moved there would still be an impact on the time it took to arrive at incidents. It was therefore felt that they were in the correct locations at the current time but this would be reviewed at the next CRMP.
- ii) In response to a query, it was confirmed that RTCs occurred across the whole county, not just in previously identified areas. The Service was now working with the Police to deliver education in specific areas.
- iii) From a breakdown of service calls, there had been an increase in the areas of flooding and attendance at suicides, as requested by partner agencies. There was little prevention work that could be undertaken around suicide, although the Service was represented on various community safety bodies to support partners where possible. With regard to flooding, the Service was working with partners to identify areas where this was occurring to undertake more proactive work.
- iv) Members were in agreement that the work being undertaken around home fire safety checks was excellent and asked that their thanks be passed to the officers undertaking the work.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mrs Newton CC and seconded by Mr Hills 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 January 2023 be noted.

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

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning progress made since November 2022 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 7' is filed with these minutes.

It was reported that the recent whole-time recruitment campaign had now ended with 36 successful candidates, 22 of which were external. These would commence over the coming months.

A query was raised around whether members of the CFA could still access training. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer suggested that officers within the Service would perhaps be best placed to offer immediate assistance to new members, but it was possible that political training could be available. Consideration would be given to providing training to members on an annual basis.

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

RESOLVED:

That the progress made since November 2022 in the delivery of projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks that are included in Our Plan 2020-24 be noted.

19. Organisational Risk Register.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which detailed the progress made in the identification, documentation and management of organisational risk through the Organisational Risk Register. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

It was noted that there had been a change to the Organisational Risk Register in that two related to the control system. A further report around this would be presented to the next meeting of the CFA.

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

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report and the Organisational Risk Register be noted.

20. Progress against the Internal Audit Plan 2022-23.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer concerning the progress made in delivering the Internal Audit Plan 2022-23. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

It was noted that a full update would be provided to the next meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee on the three partial assurance reports and associated high importance recommendations. Progress would also be reported on ICT Controls.

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

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted, in particular that:

- a) Eight audits are complete at least to draft report stage (three of which are prior year audits reported previously); and
- b) Three other legacy partial assurance ratings remain outstanding (although substantial progress has been made).

21. Internal Audit Plan 2023/24.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer which presented the Internal Audit Plan 2023-24. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

In response to a query around whether there had been an increase in the GDPR risk, the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer reported that staff had received training on this to ensure they realised the importance of not leaving someone's personal data anywhere. It was noted that there had been a very small data breach, but this had been reported and the Service had not received any fine.

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

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The report and Internal Audit Plan 2023-24 be noted; and
- b) The detail of the plan may change during the year in response to emerging issues and risks.

22. External Audit - Annual Report for the Year Ending 31 March 2022.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer which presented the External Auditor's (Mazars) Annual Report 2021-22. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Mazars had issued an unqualified opinion on the financial statements in November 2022 and the work on the Value for Money conclusion was now complete. No significant weaknesses in arrangements had been identified and there were no recommendations. The audit certificate could not be issued until the National Audit Office provided instructions in respect of the Authority's Whole of Government Accounts submission.

It was noted that the current challenging economic environment and its impact on arrangements would be taken into account when undertaking next year's audit.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mrs Newton CC and seconded by Mr Hills CC.

RESOLVED:

That the External Auditor's Annual Report 2021-22 be noted.

23. Financial Monitoring to end of December 2022.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer which presented the financial monitoring to the end of December 2022. This was the third report in the budget monitoring cycle and presented the key issues arising from the revenue budget and capital programme as at the end of December 2022. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

The revenue position current showed an overall forecast overspend of £319,000. Savings from the phased recruitment of new posts created as part of the 2022-23 budget and the On-Call service being below establishment had been forecasted. The firefighters' pay award as offered exceeded the budget provision as did the pay award for Green Book support staff, which had been agreed in November 2022. A number of other areas were showing significant overspends due to inflation.

The capital programme was reporting spend of £1,930,000 to date. Slippage of £5,327,000 had been identified and was being kept under review.

Attention was drawn to a breach of a treasury limit as the funds held in bank accounts for day to day purposes had exceeded the £850,000 limit approved by the CFA in February 2022. The CFA, in February 2023, had approved an increase to £1.6m with immediate effect.

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

RESOLVED:

That the revenue budget and capital programme position as at the end of December 2022 be noted.

24. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services - Plan for Improvement.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer detailing how the Service intended to react to Areas for Improvements and other development areas identified within the latest His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection report. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

The HMICFRS inspection had been completed in May/June 2022 and the Service had achieved a grade of Good in nine of the eleven sections within the summary report. The report had identified 13 Areas for Improvement and a new HMICFRS Improvement Plan had been developed. Progress in delivering the improvements would continue to be monitored.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) In relation to AFI6 – the Service should make sure it has an effective system for learning from operational incidents – it was noted that this related to holding a debrief after an incident. HMICFRS had felt that areas of weakness arising out of an incident were not communicated well enough to staff. As part of the quality assurance process, all staff would be required to sign to acknowledge any issues.
- ii) The first three Areas for Improvement related to home safety checks. At the time of the inspection, there had been concern from the Inspectorate around the number of outstanding home safety checks. However, this number had now significantly reduced.

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

RESOLVED:

That the progress made to date and the content of the report be noted.

25. Cultural Survey.

At the last meeting of the CFA, a report was considered on the independent review into the culture of London Fire Brigade and the local context within Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS). LFRS had commissioned an independent staff engagement and culture survey and arising from the outcome of this, an action plan was being developed. Under represented groups had been contacted to help produce the action plan, which would be presented to a future meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee.

26. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the CFA Corporate Governance Committee will be held on Wednesday 12 July 2023 at 2.00pm.

2.00 - 3.10 pm
15 March 2023

CHAIRMAN