

Minutes of a meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland CFA - Corporate Governance Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 15 September 2021.

PRESENT

Ms. Betty Newton CC
(in the Chair)

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

Mr. R. Hills CC
Mr. J. T. Orson JP CC
Cllr. M. Valand

In attendance

Callum Faint, Interim Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer

Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director Finance at Leicester City Council

Mick Grewcock, Interim Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Paul Weston, Interim Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Andy Galway, Area Manager – Service Assurance

Matt Davis, Audit Manager, Internal Audit and Assurance Service, Leicestershire County Council

Anna Poole, Democratic Services Officer

17. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Councillor K. Bool and Mr S. Bray CC.

18. Declarations of interests.

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

No declarations were made.

19. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items.

20. 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:

- Business Engagement Seminars which were being run by the Service to promote the importance of fire protection to business owners.
- Have a Go Days which were being held ahead of the next round of firefighter recruitment.
- PRIDE – the annual event attended by the Service.

21. Minutes of the previous meeting.

It was moved by Ms. Newton CC and seconded by Mr. Bannister CC that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2021 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2021 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

22. Draft Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement.

The CFA considered a report of the Treasurer concerning the draft Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement. A copy of the report marked "Agenda Item 6" is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that the requirement of the Regulations to have audits completed by 30 September would not be met, which was also experienced by 40% of local authority audits. It was expected that the audit would be completed towards the end of November for consideration by the CFA at its meeting in December. It was recognised that this meeting had been moved forward to 3 December, and officers would discuss the potential impact on the production of the Annual Governance Statement in time for the meeting.

It was moved by Mrs. Newton CC and seconded by Mr. Bannister CC that the draft Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21 be approved for submission to the Combined Fire Authority for approval, noting that they may be subject to amendment following the external audit.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED

That the draft Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21 be approved for submission to the Combined Fire Authority for approval, noting that they may be subject to amendment following the external audit.

23. Performance Monitoring April - July 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 – July 2021. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 7', is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that:

- i. Prevention and protection work was continuing via in-person visits and telephone calls, performance had significantly improved compared to the three-year average.
- ii. On-Call availability had risen to 61% following the low level of availability in July due to the pandemic and firefighters being 'pinged' to self-isolate.

- iii. Attendance times to life threatening incidents was currently at 10.13 seconds and although slightly above the target, was a significant improvement compared to the three-year average.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The July performance figures had adversely affected performance figures overall, but it was expected that this would improve going forward as the Service was moving resources to ensure availability and with further On-Call recruitment starting last month, it was hoped that the improvement in availability would continue.
- ii. Absence rates had risen in two distinct peaks, with July being the most significant, reflecting experience in FRS across the country. As a result, FRS had been granted exemptions under Test and Trace. The CFO assured members that, going forward, measures were in place to ensure a high degree of operational availability and added that, whilst some appliances had not been available during July, attendance times to life threatening incidents had not been adversely affected.
- iii. Community Safety and Prevention work had been limited during the pandemic as the Service had been unable to interact with communities as would normally be the case. However, the CFO assured members that the legislative work related to fire safety had continued.
- iv. Home Fire Safety Checks were an important part of service delivery. The CFO acknowledged that the performance report showed that the number of surveys completed had reduced and agreed to research this and feedback to members.
- v. The Service used a variety of social media to engage with communities, especially young people. It was challenging as social media changed frequently. The use of the After the Incident Survey was key in seeking feedback on service delivery. Satisfaction rates were incredibly high; the Service was working to increase the number of respondents and would explore whether the right questions were included in the Survey.

Members commended the Service for the work done during the Covid-19 pandemic which had resulted an improvement in the average response times.

It was moved by Mrs Newton CC and seconded by Councillor Fonseca that the performance of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the period April to July 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 July 2021 be noted.

24. 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 July 2021 in delivering projects within the Service Development

Programme and the tasks included in Appendix A of Our Plan 2019-22. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that the Virtual Fatal 4 replacement vehicle was launched on 14 September 2021 which 150+ people attended, including FRS from across the country. Following this, many bookings had been received for the VF4 to attend other FRS events.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. When the new appliances were purchased, old ones were decommissioned and these could be sold to other FRS in the UK and abroad in countries that did not have such modern appliances. This generated some income for LFRS.
- ii. There was a waiting list for the High Reach appliance, and it was understood that it was currently being built and would be delivered in time for December 2022.
- iii. The delays experienced with the Emergency Services Network were outside of the Service's control. The infrastructure necessary within the Service was prepared and awaited delivery.

It was moved by Mrs Newton CC and seconded by Councillor Fonseca that the progress made since July 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 July 2021 in the delivery of projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks that are included in Our Plan 2020-24, be noted.

25. Financial Monitoring to the end of July 2021 (Period 4).

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer concerning revenue budget and capital programme as at the end of July 2021 (Financial Period 4 in the 2021/22 year). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. Proposals were being explored for the use of the canteen space at Headquarters. The initial plans to convert it to office space with the aim to generate income was now looking unlikely due to the pandemic, with organisations seeking to rationalise their operations. Alternative options were being explored and proposals would be presented to the CFA at its meeting in December 2021.
- ii. Forge Health was an external company owned by the CFA to provide occupational health services. The company, which also provided services under contract to external organisations, had been unable to attract new customers due to the pandemic which had resulted in an income shortfall. However, there was capacity to increase private work undertaken so as to generate income without detriment to LFRS. The Treasurer added that, should Forge Health not be used by the Service for occupational health provision, then the cost to the CFA would increase.

It was moved by Mrs. Newton CC and seconded by Mr. Ghattoraya CC that

- a) The revenue budget and capital programme position as at the end of July 2021, be noted;
- b) The transfer of £440,000 of unbudgeted grant income to the Budget Strategy and COVID-19 earmarked reserve, be approved, to assist with future years' budget strategy; and
- c) That it be noted that the CFO intends to bring forward proposals to fund priority development and improvement initiatives from the forecast underspends.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That

- a) The revenue budget and capital programme position as at the end of July 2021, be noted;
- b) The transfer of £440,000 of unbudgeted grant income to the Budget Strategy and COVID-19 earmarked reserve, be approved, to assist with future years' budget strategy; and
- c) That it be noted that the CFO intends to bring forward proposals to fund priority development and improvement initiatives from the forecast underspends.

26. 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 10', is filed with these minutes.

Regarding progress against the plan, members were informed that since the report had been published, three audits were now completed to final stage. Of the three audits that had not yet been started, there were justifiable reasons as to why this was the case.

Regarding the High Importance recommendations detailed at paragraph 13 of the report, the Key Financials – Reconciliations and Balances had been included twice - one was for legacy issues found in 2019/20 and the other was for concerns identified in 2020/21 related to the imbalances on reconciled items.

The Audit Manager concluded by assuring the Committee that he was happy with the audit coverage and commended the officers at LFRS for their full cooperation and support in completing the audit.

It was moved by Mrs Newton CC and seconded by Mr Hills CC that the report be noted, particularly that

- a) two audits are completed;
- b) a key financials audit from the prior financial year was awarded a partial assurance; and
- c) two other legacy partial assurance ratings remain but there are no other partial assurance ratings in the current financial year to date.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted, particularly that

- a) two audits are completed;
- b) a key financials audit from the prior financial year was awarded a partial assurance; and
- c) two other legacy partial assurance ratings remain but there are no other partial assurance ratings in the current financial year to date.

27. Organisational Risk Register.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the Organisational Risk Register. A copy of the report marked "Agenda Item 11" is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that

- i. Risk 15/05 – Much reduced levels of fire engine availability due to industrial action. As third-party provision, with six appliances, had been secured, the risk had reduced.
- ii. Risk 17/05 - Failure to meet central government and public expectations in relation to the Grenfell Tower review. The assessment of risk had included other national incidents such as The Cube and the Manchester Arena attack.

In response to questions, the following issues were raised:

- i. The Service was well prepared for potential activity from, for example, Extinction Rebellion. Any response to such an event would be delivered through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). Members were assured that, to date, there had been very little, if any, such disruption in LLR and the Service was well linked to all LRF partners at an operational, tactical and strategic level.
- ii. Road closures were more common across LLR than people were aware. There was a strong information network operating across key agencies and LFRS were prepared to respond to potential incidents.

It was moved by Mrs Newton CC and seconded by Councillor Fonseca that the update provided within the report and the Organisational Risk Register be noted.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED

That the update provided within the report and the Organisational Risk Register be noted.

28. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee will be held on Wednesday 24 November 2021 at 2pm.

2.00 - 3.10 pm
15 September 2021

CHAIRMAN