

Minutes of a meeting of the CFA - Corporate Governance Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 17 July 2019.

PRESENT

Cllr. K. Bool (in the Chair)

Cllr. S. Barton	Mr. D. Harrison CC
Mr. I. E. G. Bentley CC	Mr. J. Kaufman CC
Cllr. L. Fonseca	Ms. Betty Newton CC
Mrs. H. J. Fryer CC	Cllr. A. Thalukdar

In attendance

Rick Taylor, Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Richard Hall, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Paul Weston, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Alison Greenhill, Treasurer
Kamal Adatia, Monitoring Officer
Neil Jones, Internal Audit Leicestershire County Council
Anna Poole, Democratic Services Leicestershire County Council

70. Appointment of Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of Councillor K. Bool as the Chairman of the CFA Corporate Governance Committee for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the Combined Fire Authority in 2020 be noted.

Councillor K. Bool – in the Chair

71. Election of Vice Chairman.

It was moved by Councillor S. Barton and seconded by Councillor A. Thalukdar that Mrs Betty Newton CC be elected Vice Chairman of the CFA.

There being no other nominations, the Chairman declared Mrs. Betty Newton CC elected as Vice Chairman of the CFA.

RESOLVED:

That Mrs. Betty Newton CC elected as Vice Chairman of the CFA.

72. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Mr Poland CC and from Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer.

73. Declarations of interest.

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

No declarations were made.

74. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

75. Chair's Announcements.

The Chairman informed the Corporate Governance Committee that, on 28 June 2019, the Service hosted its Passing Out ceremony at Beaumanor Hall for the wholetime Fire Fighter intake from January 2019. The 8 Fire Fighters were now serving fire stations across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

He highlighted that three of the Service's female members of staff had attended the National Training and Development weekend for Women in the Fire Service at the Fire Service College which was held over the weekend of 16-18 June. The three who attended were a Fire fighter, a Community educator and a Youth engagement co-ordinator. The event was attended by 185 delegates representing Fire and Rescue Services from across the country.

76. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2019 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

77. Head of Internal Audit Service Annual Report 2018-19.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer concerning the Head of Internal Audit Service (HoIAS) Annual Report 2018-19. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

The HoIAS confirmed that he had concluded that overall the control environment was adequate and effective.

Members queried the range of descriptors used to rate the assurance given for each auditable area. The HoIAS explained that each HoIAS has opportunity to declare their own wording. However, the Institute of Internal Audit was looking to undertake some work to ensure consistency in the terminology used. A variety of descriptors were used, including 'little or no, partial, reasonable, substantial and full'. Ratings above 'reasonable' showed a good level of performance and only 1 of the auditable areas for the Service had received a 'partial assurance' rating. Members welcomed the inclusion of a definition for the terminology used and an explanation of acronyms in future annual reports.

Members were informed that the assessment that the ICT Audit Resource was 'stretched and under review', referred to the Internal Audit Team at the County Council and reflected a nationwide resource issue; the Team was being reviewed and a post would be included in the new structure for ICT controls/audits. The HoIAS assured members that

the terminology used in the report did not relate to the ICT audits completed at Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service and that both were completed to standard.

It was moved by Mr Harrison CC and seconded by Mrs. Newton CC that the HoIAS Annual Report 2018-19 be approved.

RESOLVED:

That

- a) the Head of Internal Audit Service Annual Report 2018-19 be approved;
- b) a definition of the terminology and acronyms used by the HoIAS in forming an opinion on the auditable areas be included in future annual reports.

78. Performance Monitoring.

The Committee considered two reports 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 2018 - March 2019 and April - May 2019. A copy of the reports, marked 'Agenda Item 9a' and 'Agenda Item 9b' respectively, is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The definition of a 'primary fire' concerned items that had an insurable value, for example vehicles and houses; 'secondary fires' concerned items that were uninsurable such as trees, bushes and waste fires;
- ii. Members expressed concern that there had been a number of fatalities involving people over the age of 65 years. The HMICFRS report highlighted the work of the service which focussed on older and vulnerable people, including working with partners to share data and identify vulnerability. It was concerning that many people living alone had declined support from the FRS. Members suggested that the terminology used was changed as many people were not elderly or did not see themselves as vulnerable, despite possibly needing support from the FRS;
- iii. Investigation into the causation of road traffic collisions was the responsibility of Leicestershire Police and the Road Safety Partnership; this data was not shared with the Fire Service.

RESOLVED:

That the performance update for the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service as at April 2018 – March 2019 and also for the period April – May 2019, be noted.

79. Service Development Programme and Our Plan 2019-22 - Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer regarding progress made since March 2019 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 10' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made since March 2019 in delivering projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks that will be included in Appendix A of Our Plan 2019-22, be noted.

80. Draft Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer concerning the Draft Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement 2018/19. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that the accounts were currently being audited.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement 2018/19 be noted.

81. After the Incident Survey - Outcomes.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the outcomes of the After the Incident Survey 2018/19. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The Survey identified whether members of the public were happy with the level of service received and enabled areas for improvement to be identified;
- ii. A low number of information booklets had been offered to members of the public and officers were considering alternatives as it was not always appropriate to hand out the booklet and survey, for example following a road traffic collision;
- iii. Alternative forms of communication would be considered in conjunction with the Business Intelligence Team at Leicestershire County Council, to ensure that all members of the public were able to feedback on the support received;
- iv. The Service would utilise the County Council's Business Intelligence Team to capture the 'After the Incident' Survey results for 2019/20; the change in provider was due to the low return rate of survey responses for the previous provider used. The new survey would evolve over time, with new questions being added as appropriate according to the service delivered. The new contract sought a higher return rate for surveys issued; reducing the unit cost overall.

RESOLVED:

That the summary of survey findings from the After the Incident Survey 2018/19 be noted, and the evaluation of alternative methods for capturing service user feedback and satisfaction levels in the future be supported.

82. Procurement and Waivers.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer concerning the Procurement and Waivers Annual Report. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that this report had been prepared following revisions to the Contract Procedure Rules, which were included in the Constitution.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The Procurement Team from Leicester City Council had considered the practices and policies in place at the Service. As a result the area of procurement had been revised to 'substantial assurance' during the internal audit;
- ii. Under the current procurement rules, organisations were obliged to advertise in Europe; where public procurement was complex. Advertisements were placed in a Journal which was circulated throughout Europe;
- iii. Members welcomed the data being presented in tabular format in future reports for clarity.

RESOLVED:

That the summary of procurement activity in 2018/19 as required by Rule 19.2 of the Contract Procedure Rules, be noted.

83. Sickness Absence.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the calculation of the average cost of sickness absence to the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 14' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. 'Grey Book' employees were those who wore uniforms; 'Green Book' were the support staff; the cost of sickness absence was included in the salary figures within the accounts;
- ii. The core reasons for sickness were established and recorded; where the cause was due to stress, Members were reminded that the Service had a variety of support mechanisms in place to support staff with sickness absence, which had been the subject of a report to the CFA at its meeting in June 2019;
- iii. Current recruitment processes did not include screening of candidates for resilience; including this could potentially filter out the very people the Service was trying to attract and adversely affect levels of recruitment.

RESOLVED:

That the report detailing the calculation of the average cost of sickness absence to the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, be noted.

84. Fire Cadets.

The Committee received a presentation from the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer on the Fire Cadets. A copy of the presentation is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that there were two Fire cadet groups; one at Central Station and the other at New Parks. Each group operated on open entry for young people up to the age of 18 years. The cadets worked towards the National Fire Cadets Award.

Members welcomed the three fire cadets to the meeting; the cadets highlighted the unique experience that the programme gave and the benefit they received from the programme, such as discipline, fitness and friendships. They said that they felt like mini fire fighters and were proud of being Fire Cadets.

In delivering the programme, the Service aimed for sustainability, working with young people who progressed through the programme to encourage them to become instructors for future cadets. In addition, delivery was supported by community volunteers and retired fire fighters.

In response to questions, members were informed that officers welcomed the opportunity to roll out the Fire Cadets programme more widely across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland should sufficient funding become available, although cautioned that sustainability issues, in terms of sufficient volunteers over the long term, were a concern. The sustained support of the Fire Station chosen was also required. The potential for the Fire Cadets programme to support and feed in to future recruitment campaigns for Fire Fighters was recognised.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation on the Fire Cadets programme be noted.

85. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee will be held on 18 September 2019 at 2pm at Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Services Headquarters, Birstall.

2.00 – 4.00pm
17 July 2019

CHAIRMAN