

Minutes of a meeting of the CFA - Corporate Governance Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 23 January 2019.

PRESENT

Cllr. K. Bool (in the Chair)

Mr. I. E. G. Bentley CC
Mr. D. C. Bill MBE CC
Mr. D. Harrison CC
Cllr. K. Singh Johal

Ms. Betty Newton CC
Mr J. Poland 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
Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer
Matt Davis, Internal Audit Leicestershire County Council
Anna Poole, Democratic Services Leicestershire County Council

43. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Mr. J. Kaufman CC and Councillor K. Master.

44. Declarations of Interests.

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.

45. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

46. Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman informed the Corporate Governance Committee that, following his request at the last meeting for an initial update on the HMICFRS inspection findings at this meeting, he had agreed with the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer that it was too early in the inspection and feedback process to provide this. A report would be brought to the CFA once the final HMICFRS report had been received in the summer of 2019.

Regarding the recent recruitment campaign, members were informed that, of the 346 applications received, 49 were invited to interview and 12 had been selected for appointment in April 2019 and this had generated a good diverse mix of applicants. However, disappointingly, three candidates had since withdrawn, so a further three candidates had been selected from those who had passed the selection standard. Additionally, since December 2018, a further nine staff had announced that they plan to

leave the Service due to a variety of reasons - early retirement, secondment, transfer out and dismissal; creating further vacancies and the need to plan for recruitment in 2019.

As recruitment, and diversity in recruitment, was a concern to members, the Chairman agreed to discuss this further at the end of the meeting.

[The discussion is recorded here for clarity.]

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. Selection criteria (geography, the requirement for a driving license) could be restrictive and impact adversely on recruitment;
- ii. The importance of having a workforce that reflected the diversity of the area served;
- iii. The need for the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer to engage with the County Council's Legal Services to ensure that policies and practices were not discriminatory and met legal requirements;
- iv. Two-way communication channels created by the Fire and Police Advisory Group on Equalities with local communities would be utilised in the next recruitment campaign to encourage applications from under-represented groups.

RESOLVED:

That:

- i. A report would be presented to the Combined Fire Authority regarding the HMICFRS Inspection findings in summer 2019, once the HMICFRS report had been received;
- ii. A report would be presented to the Combined Fire Authority at its meeting in June 2019, setting out proposals for a recruitment campaign during 2019.

47. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 21 November 2018 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

48. Financial Monitoring to the end of November 2018.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer which presented the budget position as at the end of November 2018 for the revenue budget and capital programme 2018/19. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 6", is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that monitoring had shown a slight overspend of £34,000 which equated to only 0.1% of the overall budget. However, they were reassured that, the slight underspend reported in previous months, had been moved to 'reserves' for later use and would be used to cover this overspend. There were no further significant issues to report.

RESOLVED:

That the revenue and capital budget position as at the end of November 2018 be noted.

49. Performance Monitoring April - December 2018.

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 – December 2018. A copy of the report, marked “Agenda Item 7”, is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. There had been no significant changes to performance since the previous report to the Committee;
- ii. Regarding the primary fire fatality reported in paragraph 15 (ii), members were concerned that it was believed that the fire had been caused by the ignition of emollient cream and that warnings about such a risk should be given to the public. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer agreed to use social media to do so;
- iii. Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service advise on the design of commercial property to ensure fire risk and standards were addressed; the local authority’s Building Control Department advises on these issues for domestic dwellings;
- iv. Regarding the Key Performance Indicator related to the number of days/shifts lost to sickness, members were concerned about the monetary value of absenteeism so as to fully understand the impact on the business. The calculation of such costs was difficult due to the complexity of salaries and allowances and the fact that some absences may be covered by the overtime of another officer. However, an indicative cost could be calculated and the Treasurer agreed to bring a report to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The performance of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the period April – December 2018 be noted;
- b) A report on the calculation of the cost of sickness would be presented to the Committee at their meeting on 13 March 2019.

50. Service Development Progress Update and 'Our Plan 2018-21' - Actions Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer regarding progress made since November 2018 in delivering projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks included in Appendix A of Our Plan 2018-21. A copy of the report, marked “Agenda Item 8”, is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The Devolved Budget Management Project aimed to give the appropriate level of management to budgets whilst adding clarity and ownership to staff; no additional costs were involved in delivery of the project;

- ii. Members welcomed the range of wellbeing and support activities introduced in relation to mental health issues and commended officers for the proactive activity undertaken, especially the introduction of Mental Health First Aiders. It was pleasing that the environment was more open and accepting of mental health issues and that staff had been proactive in suggesting options for support activity, for example, the “Mindfulness” sessions;
- iii. Regarding recruitment, members were informed that female fire fighters were used as role models to promote the opportunities available and to encourage women to participate in the ‘Have-a-Go’ days. Additionally, officers had worked with community groups to encourage applications from BAME and female applicants. The support and guidance of members in all recruitment activity was welcomed;
- iv. Regarding the Home Fire Safety Check Programme, members were informed that fire fighters had no powers of entry to property, unless to fight or prevent the spread of fire. Members were concerned about the fire risk presented by the hoarding of materials in homes and were informed that fire fighters would need to be invited in to the property in order to address this. It was agreed that awareness raising was vital in addressing this; members were reminded that fire fighters were available to undertake an assessment of individual properties and were asked to raise this within their Authorities.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made in delivering projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks included in Appendix A of Our Plan 2018-21 since November 2018, be noted.

51. Progress against the Internal Audit Plan 2018 - 19.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer which informed of progress made against the Internal Audit Plan 2018-19. A copy of the report, marked “Agenda Item 9”, is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. Since production of the report to the Committee, further work had been undertaken and completed. Therefore, paragraph 6 of the report was updated as follows:

“Of the 12 potential auditable areas that were approved:

- i. 8 jobs have been completed to final stage;*
 - ii. 2 jobs have been completed to draft report stage;*
 - iii. 2 are work in progress.”*
- ii. An update was provided on completion of work related to the High Importance recommendations, including on procurement. The Committee was informed that there was presently no reason why the remaining areas of work defined in the report should not be completed in order to provide adequate assurance coverage in 2018/19.
- iii. The summary presented at paragraph 15 of the report was updated verbally to reflect progress made as follows:

<u>Status of work</u>	<u>Additional Commentary</u>
8 to final issued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Monitoring (19/1) • Declaration of Interests/Gifts and Hospitality (19/2) • General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR (19/3) • Key Financials Payroll (19/7) • Key Financials Pensions (19/8) • Fire-fighter Pensions – Roles and Responsibilities (19/11) • Fire-fighter Pensions – Pensions Calculations (19/12) • Key financial systems (19/6)
2 to draft report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HMICFRS Readiness Audit (19/4) • Procurement (19/5)
2 areas of work in progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT controls 2018-19 (19/9) • National Fraud Initiative (19/10)

- iv. In addition, members were informed that concerns identified about the 'key financials payroll' was due to the supplier of the service and not LFRS, and a meeting had been arranged with the supplier in February 2019 to discuss this.
- v. The recommendation regarding the change control policy and how change was managed and controlled, was being followed up as part of the Key ICT Controls coverage for 2018/19, to ensure that the changes were being followed.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made against the Internal Audit Plan 2018-19 be noted.

52. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee will be held on Wednesday 13 March 2019 at 2.00pm at Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters at Birstall.

2.00 - 3.40 pm
23 January 2019

CHAIRMAN