

Minutes of a meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland CFA - Corporate Governance Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 13 July 2022.

PRESENT

Mr. N. D. Bannister CC
Cllr. S. Barton
Cllr. K. Bool
Mr. D. A. Gamble CC

Mr. K. Ghattoraya CC
Mr. R. Hills CC
Ms. Betty Newton CC
Mr. J. T. Orson JP CC

In attendance

Callum Faint, Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer
Colin Sharpe, representing the Treasurer
Karl Bowden, Interim Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Neil Jones, Head of Internal Audit Services, Leicestershire County Council
Leah Parsons, Mazars
Gemma Duckworth, Democratic Services Officer

1. Appointment of Chairman.

At the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority meeting held on 15 June 2022, Councillor Bool was nominated as Chairman Elect of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee.

It was moved by Mrs. M. E. Newton CC and seconded by Mr. J. Orson CC that Councillor K Bool be appointed Chairman of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the CFA in 2023.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor K Bool be appointed Chairman of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the CFA in 2023.

Councillor K Bool in the Chair

2. Election of Vice Chairman.

The Chairman sought nominations for the position of Vice Chairman of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Councillor S Barton that Mrs. M. E. Newton CC be appointed Vice Chairman of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the CFA in 2023. There being no other nominations, the Chairman declared Mrs. M. E. Newton CC be appointed Vice Chairman of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Mrs. M. E. Newton CC be appointed Vice Chairman of the CFA's Corporate Governance Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the CFA in 2023.

3. Apologies for absence.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Byrne.

4. 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.

5. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items.

6. Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman made his announcements which covered the following matters:

- The 20th Annual Women in the Fire Service Training and Development weekend;
- The expansion of the road safety education programme using the Hazard Express;
- That the service is running a series of virtual workshops to support and guide potential firefighter applicants, mainly from under represented groups.

7. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2022 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

8. After the Incident Survey Annual Report 2021-22.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the outcomes of the After the Incident survey 2021/22. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

It was noted that 490 responses had been received in 2021/22, which was an increase on the previous year. Overall, positive feedback had been received in every section of the survey and 99.6% of respondents had expressed overall satisfaction with the service they had received from LFRS.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) A query was raised around ensuring that all officers were trained in providing after care to those who had been involved in an emergency. It was the intention to increase this provision and ensure that appropriate information was provided to individuals after an emergency. Depending on the incident, it was not always felt appropriate to ask someone to complete a survey, but a leaflet was being developed relating to dealing with a fire in the home. Assurance was given that all staff were extremely empathetic and signposted people to

appropriate support. The Red Cross also provided additional support to those who had been involved in an incident.

- ii) There was concern that people were expected to complete the survey online, but this was not always possible. Confirmation would be sought as to how those were contacted who did not have an email address or access to a computer.
- iii) In comparison to previous surveys, it was stated that there had been an uptake in positive performance. Although the data set had previously been small, this was now increasing and it was hoped that this would show continued further improvements.

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

RESOLVED:

That the summary findings of the 'After the Incident' survey be noted.

9. Performance Monitoring April 2021 to March 2022 and April to May 2022.

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 2021 to March 2022 and April to May 2022. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) It was reported that the special service for non-fire incidents was an increasing area of business. This was presenting a number of challenges as the incidents were often not emergencies and this impacted on availability to deal with other emergencies. The situation would continue to be monitored.
- ii) Within the period April – May 2022, there had been a potential fire fatality. Guidance was being awaited from the Home Office as to whether this was the case.
- iii) In response to a query as to whether the performance figures were still affected by the impact of Covid-19, it was stated that this was not the case. The figures now largely reflected pre-Covid performance and it was noted that the number of traffic accidents had not increased despite the roads becoming more busy.
- iv) An area of improvement was attendance times, as these were still slightly too high. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer stated that this was an area that was difficult to control due to factors such as location. However, work was taking place to focus community education in areas of the county where there was no fire station. The Service was also focussing on areas that could be more easily controlled, for example call handling times. Although this was a stretch target, performance was felt to be moving in the right direction.
- v) In relation to staff sickness, there had been a considerable number of absences as a result of Covid-19; at the height of the pandemic, there had

been an average of 100 members of staff off at the same time. However, it was pleasing to note that staff had volunteered to work overtime to minimise disruption to the service during this time and it had been possible to manage 97% availability on wholetime appliances. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer also reported that the Service had received a Government grant to help cover Covid-19 associated costs.

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

RESOLVED:

That the performance of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the period April 2021 to March 2022 and April to May 2022 be noted.

10. External Audit Strategy Memorandum.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer which presented the CFA's external auditor's (Mazars LLP) Audit Strategy Memorandum for the year ended 31 March 2022. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

The audit was expected to be completed by November 2022 and the CFA would be asked to approve the audited accounts and associated documents by 30 November, in line with the Accounts and Audit Regulations. It was pleasing to note that all stages of the audit were on track and a further update would be presented to the Committee in November.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Mr Orson CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the External Audit Strategy Memorandum for the year ended 31 March 2022 be noted.

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

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning progress made since March 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 11', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) The use of social media to promote community events and news was commended as it was felt that this was a way to interest young people. This was continually being developed.
- ii) The work of the Premises Risk Collaboration Group (PRCG) was highlighted. This Group had been formed as a result of the Grenfell Tower inquiry and its main purpose was to oversee the delivery of any messages arising from the inquiry. There had been proactive engagement with landlords to act on the Government's recommendations in relation to tall buildings and specific plans

for evacuating individual buildings were monitored. A report on the work of the PRCG would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

- iii) There was some concern that private landlords of new buildings had no requirement to check the individual needs of tenants, although the new Fire Safety Act gave the Service enforcement powers with regard to domestic dwellings. More recently, there had been significant traction on new buildings of high rise design. This would need to be considered by a Joint Planning Group led by the Health and Safety Executive, of which Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service would be a statutory partner.

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

RESOLVED:

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

12. Head of Internal Audit Services Annual Report 2021/22.

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer which presented the Head of Internal Audit Service Annual Report 2021-22. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

It was noted that overall, the Head of Internal Audit Service's opinion was positive and any weaknesses identified were being managed.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Mr Gamble CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Head of Internal Audit Service Annual Report 2021-22 be noted.

13. Sickness Analysis - April 2021 to March 2022.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which presented an update on sickness analysis for Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the period April 2021 to March 2022. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

In response to a query around the mental health support in place for staff, it was stated that TRIM assessments were undertaken after an incident, there were signposts to services, and a health and wellbeing support pack available. The newly appointed Health and Wellbeing Lead was in the process of visiting fire stations to assess whether any further support was required. It was pleasing to note that staff were now feeling more confident about reporting that they had mental health issues and assurance was given that staff were supported if they had non-work related mental health issues.

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

RESOLVED:

That the sickness analysis for the period April 2021 to March 2022 be noted.

14. Procurement and Waivers Annual Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer informing of procurement related activity and compliance for the financial year 2021/22. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 14' is filed with these minutes.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Mr Hills CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the summary of procurement activity in 2021/22, as required by Rule 19.2 of the Contracts Procedure Rules 2018, be noted.

15. Governance Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer which provided an update and assurance on governance and ethical issues. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 15' is filed with these minutes.

The Government's intention to make it a statutory requirement for Fire and Rescue Authorities to have at least one independent member on the Committee was noted. At present, the timescale for the introduction of the relevant legislation was unclear but in the interim, the Government was encouraging FRAs and local authorities to establish their arrangements in line with CIPFA's revised guidance. A further report would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

Consultation entitled 'Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service: Government Consultation' was currently being undertaken. The proposed response, which needed to be submitted by 26 July, had been drafted and approved by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the CFA. This would also be circulated to members of the CFA.

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

RESOLVED:

That the update provided on governance and ethical issues be noted.

16. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the CFA Corporate Governance Committee will be held on Wednesday 14 September 2022 at 2.00pm.