



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Audit and Standards Committee

Wednesday, 22 January 2020, 10:30

**Chairman: Mr M Hart**

**Vice-Chairman: Mr A Amos**

## **Minutes**

**Members Present:** Ms P Agar, Mr A Amos, Mr S Bowen, Mrs E Eyre BEM, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr M Hart, Dr K Pollock, Mr L Stark, Mrs D Toynbee

### **158 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Mrs K Hey, Mr A Hardman and Mr R Morris.

### **159 Named Substitutes**

There were no named substitutes.

### **160 Declarations of Interest (if any)**

There were no interests declared.

### **161 Confirmation of Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 15 October 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **162 Internal Audit Draft Audit Plan 2020/21**

The Head of Internal Audit Shared Service presented Members with the Draft Audit Plan for 2020/21.

Members were made aware of a typographical error in paragraph 8 with reference to a watching brief being kept on the financial systems over the

past 2 years. It should state that it does not indicate any particular increase in risk or identified issue.

Members were pleased to note that operational progress against the Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 would be closely monitored by the Head of Internal Audit Shared Service and would be reported to the Committee on a quarterly basis, which would also include any 'high' priority recommendations.

A Member queried whether the Committee was able to ask for Audits to be undertaken in certain areas where they felt it was necessary and were assured that any suggestions should, in the first instance, be directed to the Senior Management Board who would then discuss with the Auditors and make a recommendation to the Committee as appropriate.

A Member expressed her concern whether the Committee could have done more to support the Authority in relation to the HMICFRS inspection report. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that this was not the case but welcomed any feedback from Members on areas that they felt required further focus.

*[Cllr Eyre entered the meeting at 10.40am]*

**RESOLVED that the 2020/21 Draft Internal Audit Plan be approved.**

## **163 Internal Audit Progress Report 2019/20**

The Head of Internal Audit Shared Service presented Members with a progress update on the delivery and progress to date on 2019/20. He explained that five reviews had been completed and the outcomes were all positive.

Members were pleased to note that the Internal Audit Plan for 2019/20 was progressing steadily and any recommendations in regards to the reports produced throughout the year were being addressed through robust management action plans and in a timely manner.

A Member requested clarification on the review of financial processes and the recommendation to strengthen training and segregation of duties.

With regard to segregation of duties for the main ledger, it was explained that smaller teams needed a clearer segregation of duties and the use of automated systems, where available, should be encouraged.

With regard to Equality and Diversity training, the Chief Fire Officer explained that an action plan had been put in place with management to ensure that the right training was getting to the right people in a timely

manner.

*[Cllr Bowen entered the meeting at 10.51am]*

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

#### **164 People Strategy 2020 - 2022**

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented Members with the People Strategy 2020-2022.

Members were advised that the NFCC People Strategy runs until 31 March 2022 and therefore it was proposed to review and renew the current People Strategy to ensure it accurately reflected the priorities over the next two years representing the Service's commitment to supporting and developing the workforce in delivering the strategy. A further review would be completed to align with the NFCC update for April 2022.

Members were pleased to note that with the introduction of a new strategy, training would be delivered in bite size chunks to staff to meet the needs of the workforce.

A Member welcomed the strategy and thought it was very positive, but sought reassurance there wasn't a blame culture in the organisation. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer assured Members that there was a revised set of values published in all work locations and that staff were now happy to report health and safety events as they knew they would be dealt with correctly with no blame.

With regard to the workforce getting their view and opinions across to management, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that they were either passed on from Representative Bodies or fed back following Senior Management Board visits to all teams and watches where honest discussions took place.

**RESOLVED that the People Strategy 2020-2022 be accepted and the proposed action areas to be included in the People Strategy Implementation Programme be noted.**

#### **165 Review of Financial Regulations**

The Treasurer requested Members to approve the revised set of Financial Regulations.

Members were informed that in order to reflect the Strategic Alliance between the Fire Authority and Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority, the latest review had taken an integrated approach and aligned, as far as possible, the Regulations of both Services. Members were assured that there were no practical changes to the arrangements and therefore there was no direct impact on the way the Authority already operates.

A Member requested that the Regulations be gender neutral and the Treasurer confirmed that amendments would be made to reflect this.

Members queried the differences in Hereford & Worcester's version to Shropshire and Wrekin's and were assured by the Head of Legal Services that although both Authorities had the same common Regulations, certain specifics to each Authority would always be different.

A Member queried if both Authorities used the same Auditors. The Treasurer confirmed that both Authorities use the same External Audit company, however a different team, but Internal Audit had separate arrangements at present.

**RESOLVED that the Committee approves the revised Financial Regulations.**

## **166 Health and Safety Committee Update**

The Head of Operational Support presented Members with an update on the activities and items of significance from the Service's Health and Safety Committee.

A Member had concern over the increase in vehicle collisions. The Head of Operational Support assured Members that the statistics included incidents that were not the Service's fault and had no concerns.

A Member requested an explanation with regard to the lack of supply of water at two incidents. Members were assured that on the one occasion it was due to an electronic fault on the appliance and the other was due to a new housing estate not uploaded on the hydrant map system which caused a delay in obtaining additional water.

*[Cllr Stark left the meeting at 11.44am]*

**RESOLVED that the following issues, in particular, be noted:**

**(i) Health and Safety performance information recorded between July 2019 to September 2019 (Quarter 2;**

**(ii) The involvement of the Service in Health and Safety initiatives.**

At the end of the meeting Members thanked officers for the interesting tour of the Wyre Forest Hub in December and in particular were pleased to hear that the station staff had been involved in the design.

The Meeting ended at: 11:45

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman