



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Audit and Standards Committee

Wednesday, 20 April 2022, 10:30

Chairman: Mr M Hart

Vice-Chairman: Mr A Amos

Minutes

Members Present: Mr A Amos, Mr D Boatright, Mr S Bowen, Mr B Clayton, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mrs E Marshall, Ms N McVey

234 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

235 Named Substitutes

There were no named substitutes.

236 Declarations of Interest (if any)

There were no interests declared.

237 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

238 Internal Audit Progress Report 2021/22

The Head of Internal Audit Shared Service presented Members with an update in regards to the delivery of the Internal Audit Plan 2021/22.

Members noted that the four core financial reviews had been completed and no high priority recommendations had been reported. The final two areas would be brought to the Committee upon completion.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Draft Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

The Head of Legal Services presented Members with the draft Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 for approval.

Members were informed that the Authority has to review its governance arrangements once a year via self assessment. Members were pleased to note that the Authority had provided evidence of compliance with all the core and supporting principles of good governance. There were no areas where immediate action was required and there were no areas where the direction of travel had decreased during 2021/22 where the status was less than satisfactory.

Members were pleased to note that this was the first time that all areas were 'green' which gave the assurance necessary to approve the draft annual statement.

RESOLVED that the draft Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 be approved.

Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services

The Chief Fire Officer updated Members on progress to implement the Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services and to make a recommendation to the Authority that the Constitution be amended to reflect a commitment by Members to champion the Core Code throughout the Service.

Members noted the five ethical principles of the Core Code of Ethics set out to improve organisational culture and workforce diversity of FRSs, ensuring that communities were supported in the best way.

Members were asked to endorse the implementation of the Core Code and approve the proposed amendment to Part 2 of the Articles of the Constitution.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The implementation of the Core Code of Ethics be endorsed; and***
- ii) The Authority be recommended to amend the key roles of all Members, as set out in Article 2.3(a) of the Authority's constitution, by the addition of:***

All Members will

- (ix) commit to following the Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services and championing its use throughout the***

Service.

241 Prevention Cause of Concern – Action Plan Update

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer updated Members on the action plan created to discharge the Cause of Concern issued by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in relation to Prevention Activity.

Members noted the update on the action plan and the key work streams identified still to be completed to make the necessary improvements.

Members also noted that HMICFRS were returning at the end of July to do a short revisit to look at evidence provided to them.

A Member requested further details on the response from the engagement of home fire safety promotions. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed he would provide statistics out of the meeting.

RESOLVED that progress against the action plan created to discharge the cause of concern in relation to Prevention activity be noted.

242 Annual Compliments, Complaints, Concerns and Requests for Information 2021/22

The Head of Legal Services presented a report on compliments, complaints, concerns and requests for information made by the public to the Service over the past 12 months.

Members were informed that there were slightly fewer complaints over the past 12 months compared to last year and were assured that officers were satisfied that there were no recurring themes or trends in the concerns and complaints to give any cause for concern.

Members noted that there continues to be a high volume of FOI requests, which takes up a considerable amount of staff time. Where possible the Service is putting as much information on the website as possible for the public. The Service was also looking at how they can also put a summary of incident reports on the website to be more proactive.

Members also noted that although there were only a small number of Subject Access Requests, these were also extremely time consuming.

Members were assured that all complaints are investigated by duty officers, draft responses are sent to Legal Services to be reviewed and all complainants can ask for a further review by the Assistant Chief Fire

Officer or make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

A Member requested further details on the poor response/service complaint and the Head of Legal Services would provide this information out of the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes that during the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022:

i) a total of 270 requests for information containing 830 queries about the Service were received. No requests were passed to the Information Commissioners Office for review.

ii) a total of 40 compliments were received from the public;

iii) 28 complaints about Service activities were made;

iv) 15 complaints or concerns were received about activities carried out by other organisations or individuals; and

v) One of the complainants appealed the response provided and none were passed to the Local Government Ombudsman for further investigation.

**243 Health and Safety Committee Update: October – December 2021
(Quarter 3)**

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented the Committee with a Health and Safety update on activities and items of significance.

Members were pleased to note that the number of safety events recorded in Quarter 3 had decreased by 10 compared to the previous quarter.

Members also noted that the Health and Safety Advisor had worked with the Training Centre to ensure 10 response staff received the manual handling 'Train the Trainer' course to improve manual handling training across the Service to help reduce personal injury incidents.

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

(i) The involvement of the Service in Health and Safety initiatives; and

(ii) Health and Safety performance information recorded during October to December 2021 (Quarter 3).

The Meeting ended at: 11:25

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman