



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Audit and Standards Committee

Wednesday, 19 July 2023, 10:30

Chairman: Mr M Hart

Vice-Chairman: Mr A Amos

Minutes

Members Present: Mr A Amos, Mr B Brookes, Mr B Clayton, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr M Hart

0282 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Boatright-Greene, Cllr Hardman, Cllr McVey, Cllr R Morris, Cllr Toynbee.

0283 Named Substitutes

There were no named substitutes.

0284 Declarations of Interest (if any)

There were no interests declared.

0285 Confirmation of Minutes

The Treasurer confirmed that at the meeting on 19th April 2023, he had advised that the Audit of the 2021/22 accounts was finally complete. However, the Auditors have since indicated that as they were late signing off the report, the valuation of LGPS pension liabilities should, in their view, be updated and the accounts amended accordingly.

The Actuaries to the LGPS have stated that, in their opinion, the liabilities have not changed, but there will be a further delay whilst the Treasurer provides the Auditor with further evidence to justify the approach.

The Chairman enquired how much time this was taking to deal with and the cost to the public.

The Treasurer confirmed that not a large amount was being spent on this issue, but it would cause a delay in producing the accounts for 2022/23.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

0286 Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

Helen Tiffney from Internal Audit Shared Service presented Members with an update on the delivery of the Internal Audit annual programme for 2022/23.

Members noted the Internal Audit Annual report 2021/22, that the audit plan had provided an assurance level of 'full' for three core financial areas, no limited or below assurance areas had been reported or any high priority recommendations had been made.

The Chairman commented that it was good to hear that there were no concerns.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the Internal Audit Charter and that the audit plan delivered in 2022/23 had provided an assurance level of "full" for three core financial areas and that no limited or below assurance areas had been reported or any high priority recommendations made.

0287 Equality Objectives 2021-2025 Update for Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 2022-2023

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer updated Members on Equality Objectives for Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 2022/23.

Since the report was published, the report of the cultural review undertaken by Dr D Willoughby had been published and circulated to all Members.

A number of the areas highlighted as amber, are closer to green. Training as mentioned in the report by Dr Willoughby is already being rolled out across the Authority.

The Chairman asked what the time line was for the converting of the items from amber to green. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the training was being provided to over 700+ members of staff and therefore this is estimated to take between 12 – 18 months.

It was agreed that future updates would indicate the percentage of staff who had completed the training.

The Assistant Chief Officer confirmed that the Member EDI Champions continued to be very engaged in the work being undertaken.

The Committee noted its satisfaction with the work being undertaken and the strategies that the Authority is putting into place to deal with EDI.

RESOLVED that:

i) the progress made against the Equality Objectives 2021-2025 for Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 2021-2022 be noted; and

ii) the future delivery and governance of the Service's Equality Agenda from 2023-2024 be noted.

0288 Risk Management and Strategic Risk Register – Annual Update

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer discussed the Risk Management and Strategic Risk Register.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer highlighted the five generic risks running across the whole organisation as well as the specific risks included on the Strategic Risk Register.

A Member required clarification on how the residual score was calculated. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that a number of factors were taken into consideration e.g., likelihood of risk, the impact it would have if it occurred and the control measures the Authority has in place to mitigate the risk. All factors are given a number which are multiplied to give a residual score.

Members complimented officers on the thoroughness of the approach and were reassured that the Authority were challenging issues and considering potential risks before they occurred.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

0289 Minimising Firefighter Exposure to Carcinogens – Service Update

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer provided an update on steps taken to minimise the exposure that firefighters have to carcinogens, including those arising from contaminated fire kit. He set out some of the steps that the Authority have already put into place to try to ensure a clean space while returning from an incident in the fire appliance.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer was thanked for producing the comprehensive report. However, a Member wanted clarification on keeping the cabs as a clear zone. It was enquired whether there was a clear cab policy nationally that the Authority could work within.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Authority is working within the guidance and advice provided by the NFCC Health & Safety Committee. The Authority are moving with technology to ensure that contaminated equipment is kept contained.

The Chairman wished to know if an external body was looking at the steps the Authority were undertaking to ensure they were being followed correctly. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that every 2 years the Service participates in a Health and Safety audit by other FRSs in the region. The Authority can select the areas that need auditing and advise is given if the other FRSs believe that additional steps are required to be taken.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Treasurer confirmed that the issue of carcinogens and the measures taken were being reflected in the current tender for insurances.

RESOLVED that current and planned measures being taken by the Service to minimise the risk of carcinogens to firefighters be noted.

0290 Update from the Health and Safety Committee

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer provided Members with an update from the Health and Safety Committee.

Members were informed that the Health and Safety Executive would be visiting 10 Fire Authorities in the next 12 months to look at the steps being taken in response to the risks from contamination. No Fire Authority will know if they will be selected for the visit until close to the date of the visit.

Work is being undertaken within regional driving instructors in relation to slow driving, as this is where most of the property of the public is damaged.

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

- i) The involvement of the Service in Health and Safety initiatives;***
- ii) Health and Safety performance information recorded during January to March (Quarter 4)***
- iii) Workforce Health & Wellbeing performance (Quarter 4)***

The Meeting ended at: 11:18

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman