



HEREFORD & WORCESTER FIRE AUTHORITY

Audit and Standards Committee

AGENDA

Wednesday, 20 January 2021

10:30

This will be held as a virtual meeting on Teams.

The meeting can be accessed via a link which will be emailed to participants.

Information for Members of the Public

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority will be holding this meeting in accordance with the arrangements for remote meetings of a local authority. For more information please refer to: Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Please note that this is a public meeting, to be conducted remotely by video conferencing between invited participants and live streamed on the internet for general access. You are able to listen and view the live video stream of the meeting via the link that will be published on the Fire Authority's website <https://hwfire.cmis.uk.com/hwfire/Meetings.aspx>

ACCESS TO INFORMATION – YOUR RIGHTS. The press and public have the right to attend Local Authority meetings and to see certain documents. You have:

- 1) the right to attend all Authority and Committee meetings by viewing or listening to the live stream unless the business to be transacted would disclose “confidential information” or “exempt information”;
- 2) the right to film, record or report electronically on any meeting to which the public are admitted provided you do not do so in a manner that is disruptive to the meeting.
- 3) the right to inspect agenda and public reports at least five days before the date of the meeting (available on our website: <http://www.hwfire.org.uk>);
- 4) the right to inspect minutes of the Authority and Committees for up to six years following the meeting (available on our website: <http://www.hwfire.org.uk>); and
- 5) the right to inspect background papers on which reports are based for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting.

If you are participating at a virtual meeting of the Authority under the Public Participation item, you will be deemed to have consented to being broadcast via the Authority’s website and/or filmed or recorded by the Authority and/or anyone exercising their rights under paragraph 2 above. Alternatively, your representations can be read out at the meeting on your behalf.

Please also note that when taking part in public participation, your name and a summary of what you say at the meeting may be included in the minutes.

If you have any queries regarding this agenda or any of the decisions taken or wish to exercise any of these rights of access to information please contact Committee & Members’ Services by email at committeeservices@hwfire.org.uk.

WELCOME AND GUIDE TO TODAY’S MEETING. These notes are written to assist you to follow the meeting. Decisions at the meeting will be taken by the **Members** who are democratically elected representatives and they will be advised by **Officers** who are paid professionals. The Fire Authority comprises 25 Members and appoints committees to undertake various functions on behalf of the Authority. There are 19 Members who are Worcestershire County Councillors on the Authority and 6 who are Herefordshire Council Councillors. The Police & Crime Commissioner also attends Fire Authority meetings as a non-voting Member.

Agenda Papers - Attached is the Agenda which is a summary of the issues to be discussed and the related reports by Officers.

Chairman - The Chairman is responsible for the proper conduct of the meeting.

Officers - Also present during the meeting will be the Chief Fire Officer and/or other Officers of the Fire Authority who will advise on legal and procedural matters and record the proceedings. These include the Clerk and the Treasurer to the Authority.

The Business - The Chairman will conduct the business of the meeting. The items listed on the agenda will be discussed.

Decisions - At the end of the discussion on each item the Chairman will put any amendments or motions to the meeting and then ask the Members to vote. The Officers do not have a vote.

Protocols for Remote Meetings

Status of these protocols

- These protocols supplement the new legislative arrangements permitting remote meetings of a local authority, under the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.
- The Monitoring Officer reserves the right to amend or revoke these protocols at any time on reasonable notice. These protocols may also be revoked, superseded or amended by any standing orders that the Authority specifically adopts in respect of remote meetings.
- These protocols apply to anyone participating in a remote meeting, being: Members, officers, members of the public, other invited participants.

Participating in a remote meeting

- Officers and Members should join the meeting no less than 15 minutes before the scheduled start time to allow for any technical issues and avoid disrupting proceedings after the start time.
- At the start of the meeting the chairman will conduct a roll-call to confirm who is present and check for any connectivity issues.
- Where using video-enabled equipment, Members are asked to leave their cameras on throughout the meeting (unless connection speeds militate against this).
- Members should mute the microphone on their device when not speaking in order to reduce feedback and background noise. Committee and Members' Services can perform this function as well.

Access to documents

- Committee and Members' Services will publish the agenda and reports for meetings on the Fire Authority's website in the usual way and will notify Members and Officers by email.
- Members can either download the agenda pack from the link to the website or use the PDF sent with the email on a separate device to the one which they are using for the remote meeting.
- Printed copies will be sent to Members and Officers to support the effective conduct of the meeting where necessary. Printed copies will not be available for inspection at the Fire Authority's offices.

Officer Presentations

- Any presentations from Officers (eg Powerpoint) will be circulated to Members in PDF format in advance wherever possible and will be displayed on screen at the relevant point in the meeting. Where possible, presentations will be published on the Authority's website alongside the reports.
- When referring to reports or making specific comments, Officers should refer to the agenda page number so that all parties have a clear understanding of what is being discussed.

Protocol for Members speaking at meetings

- The Authority will be using Microsoft Teams, which will enable Members to participate in meetings remotely.
- The Chairman will ask all Members who wish to speak to indicate by pressing the 'raise your hand' button. Please do not speak or turn on your microphone until invited to do so by the Chairman. After speaking you must 'lower your hand' and turn off your microphone

- The Chairman's ruling in regard to who should speak will be final and the Chairman will have the ability to mute any attendee's microphone if required.
- When referring to reports or making specific comments, Members should refer to the agenda page number so that all parties have a clear understanding of what is being discussed.

Voting

- Where it appears to the Chairman that the will of the majority of Members in the meeting is clear, the Chairman may put the motion to the meeting and ask if there are any votes against or any Members wishing to abstain. Those Members not voting against the motion or indicating they wish to abstain will be taken to be in favour.
- In all other circumstances a named vote will be taken. The Monitoring Officer will read out the Members' names, record the votes and announce the outcome to the meeting.
- Named votes will not be recorded in the minutes unless an individual Councillor asks to be recorded as voting "for", "against" or "abstained".

Participation by members of the public and the media

- A member of the public who has been given permission to speak during the public participation section of the meeting will be sent the relevant link to join the remote meeting and be invited to participate at the relevant point on the agenda. Members of the public who have been given permission by the Chairman to address a meeting may read out their question or written statement, of which prior notice will have been given, when invited to do so by the Chairman.
- As an alternative, members of the public who wish to address the meeting may submit a written statement that can be read out by the Chairman at the appropriate time.

Dealing with exempt items of business

- When confidential, or "exempt" information – as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 – is under consideration, the Chairman and Monitoring Officer will close the meeting and a private meeting will convene with Officers and Members only.
- Any Councillor or Officer in remote attendance who fails to disclose that there are other persons present, who are not permitted to see and/or hear the meeting, will be in breach of the Authority's Code of Conduct.

Dealing with technical difficulties

- In the event that the Chairman or Monitoring Officer identifies a failure of the remote participation facility, the Chairman may declare an adjournment while the fault is addressed.
- If it is not possible to address the fault and the meeting is inquorate, the meeting will be abandoned until such time as it can be reconvened.
- If the meeting remains quorate, it will continue. A vote will be taken in the absence of any Members who are unable to continue to participate remotely.
- If the meeting was due to determine an urgent matter or one which is time-limited and it has not been possible to continue because of technical difficulties, the matter may be dealt with in accordance with the 'urgent business' arrangements permitted by the Authority's Constitution.

Interpretation

Where the Chairman is required to interpret the Authority's Constitution in light of the requirements of remote participation, he or she shall take advice from the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer prior to making a ruling, where practicable. The Chairman's decision in all cases shall be final.



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Audit and Standards Committee

Wednesday, 20 January 2021, 10:30

Agenda

Councillors

Mr M Hart (Chairman), Mr A Amos (Vice Chairman), Ms P Agar, Mr S Bowen, Mrs E Eyre BEM, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mrs K Hey, Mr R J Morris, Dr K Pollock, Mr L Stark, Mrs D Toynbee

No.	Item	Pages
1	Apologies for Absence To receive any apologies for absence.	
2	Named Substitutes To receive details of any Member of the Authority nominated to attend the meeting in place of a Member of the Committee.	
3	Declarations of Interest (if any) This item allows the Chairman to invite any Councillor to declare an interest in any of the items on this Agenda.	
4	Confirmation of Minutes To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2020.	1 - 5
5	Annual Audit Letter 2019/20 Details	

6 Internal Audit Progress Report 2020/21

Details

7 Equality & Gender Pay Gap Report 2019/2020

Details

8 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2020-2025: Progress Report Q2-Q3 2020-21

To provide a summary of progress for Q2 to Q3 2020-21 against the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2020-2025.

9 Health and Safety Committee Update

Details



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Audit and Standards Committee

Thursday, 08 October 2020, 10:30

Chairman: Mr M Hart

Vice-Chairman: Mr A Amos

Minutes

Members Present: Ms P Agar, Mr A Amos, Mr S Bowen, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mr R J Morris, Mr L Stark, Mrs D Toynbee

177 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr E Eyre, Cllr K Hey and Cllr K Pollock.

178 Named Substitutes

There were no named substitutes.

179 Declarations of Interest (if any)

Cllr P Agar declared that she was a member of the LGPS Pensions Board.

180 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

181 Draft Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

The Head of Legal Services presented Members with evidence compiled during the self assessment review which provided the assurances that sit behind the Annual Governance Statement. Members were also asked to approve the draft Annual Governance Statement 2019/20.

Members were reminded that a few years ago they would have seen a lot

of amber and some red on the document. The Head of Legal Services was pleased to report that the Service was now at the stage that everything was green except for Managing Data which indicated that there were minor actions needed. Internal Audit had conducted a follow up inspection to the GDPR audit that had been undertaken in 2019 and confirmed that the previous recommendations had been implemented, further details of which were mentioned in agenda item 9 'Internal Audit Progress Report 2020/21'.

The Head of Legal Services was also pleased to announce that external consultants Aristi, who act as the Service's virtual Data Protection Officer, had undertaken a virtual audit last week confirming that out of the 66 areas, 50 of those were compliant which was excellent news.

A Member queried how the Service was maintaining staff appraisals during the pandemic and the Head of HR was pleased to report that managers had been advised over the last few months to continue them virtually or face to face where it allowed. The Head of HR was asked to provide information relating to the percentage of appraisals carried out following the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Draft Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 be approved.

182 Audit Progress and External Audit Findings Reports 2019/20

The Treasurer introduced the External Auditors' reports for consideration and the Letter of Representation for approval.

The External Auditors, Grant Thornton, then explained in detail the work they do around the accounts and the value for money. The main headline was Covid-19 where the impact was considered, remote working had brought challenges and therefore some audits had taken longer than normal which could have an impact on fees.

They were pleased to report that the pre audit financial Statement of Accounts were published on 29 May, which was well before the revised deadline and thanked the Finance team for a good quality set of accounts with only a few amendments required.

The External Auditors concluded that the work was complete and they were in a position to provide an un-qualified opinion on the Accounts with a clean Value for Money judgement in due course.

[Cllr Bowen joined the meeting at 10.51am].

RESOLVED that:

i) the Audit Progress Report and the Sector Update 2019/20 be noted;

ii) the External Audit Findings Report 2019/20 including an unqualified opinion on the 2019/20 accounts be noted; and

iii) the Letter of Representation be approved on behalf of the Authority.

183 Statement of Accounts 2019/20

The Treasurer presented the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts for approval.

Members were pleased to note that the Accounts were signed off on 29 May 2020 in line with the underlying requirements of the Regulations.

RESOLVED that the Statement of Accounts 2019/20 be approved.

184 Annual Statement of Assurance 2020-21

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the draft Statement of Assurance 2020-21 for publication.

It was noted that the reference to the PCC Business case would be updated prior to publication to reflect the latest position and that additional text would be added to the key to the pie chart.

Members were made aware that the finalised version would be published on the Service's website and would include updated hyperlinks to the latest Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the External Audit letter.

RESOLVED that the draft Statement of Assurance 2020-21 be approved for publication, following amendment to text relating to the PCC Business Case and the addition of text to the key to the pie chart.

185 Internal Audit Progress Report 2020/21

The Head of Internal Audit Shared Service presented Members with an update to the delivery of the Internal Audit Plan 2020/21.

Members were made aware that due to the Covid-19 response, the Plan had been slow to start due to the restrictions of access to systems as there was no remote access available to WIASS. The Treasurer confirmed that this was just an oversight and there was a simple technical solution for remote access going forward.

With regard to KPIs, the team involved unfortunately had their priorities changed resulting in the KPI audit being rescheduled for later in the year.

With regard to GDPR, assurance was given to Members that those action plans had now been implemented in full and confirmed that they were now considered satisfied.

There was concern from Members of the incomplete audits this year but were assured that work would be undertaken by prioritising on a risk basis for a reasonable conclusion.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

186 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.

Members were made aware of the decrease in safety events compared to the last quarter which were reflective of the more limited activities undertaken during the Covid-19 lockdown.

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

i) Health and Safety performance information recorded during April to June 2020 (Quarter 1); and

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

187 Equality Monitoring 2019/2020 – Interim Report

The Head of Community Risk and HR & Development presented Members with the Service's Equality Monitoring 2019/20 interim report for approval.

Cllr Oborski, one of the EDI Champions, attended the meeting and commended the report, expressing that even due to restrictions placed on the Service by Covid-19, excellent progress had been made.

One Member expressed concern at the wording of some of the guidance

relating to the Equality Act and would be in contact with Officers following the meeting.

A request was made by Members to provide trend information in future reports to monitor progress. Officers agreed to provide this at future meetings.

Members were also informed that there was a programme of communications for Black History month.

RESOLVED that the Equality Monitoring 2019/20 interim report be approved for publication.

The Meeting ended at: 12:03

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman