



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Audit and Standards Committee

Wednesday, 20 January 2021, 10:30

Chairman: Mr M Hart

Vice-Chairman: Mr A Amos

Minutes

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

Also in Attendance: Mrs F Oborski - EDI Member Champion

188 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Hey and Cllr R Morris.

189 Named Substitutes

There were no named substitutes.

190 Declarations of Interest (if any)

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

Cllr F Oborski declared that she was a member of the LGA Fire Commission.

[Cllr A Amos entered the meeting at 10.33am].

191 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

192 Annual Audit Letter 2019/20

The External Auditors, Grant Thornton UK LLP, presented Members

with the Annual Audit Letter 2019/20 which summarised the findings from the 2019/20 audit.

Members were also made aware of the additional fees arisen from the complications in carrying out the audit remotely under Covid restrictions. The Treasurer assured Members that he was not concerned with the additional costs.

RESOLVED that:

(i) the Annual Audit Letter 2019/20 from External Auditors, Grant Thornton UK LLP be noted; and

(ii) the additional audit fee be noted.

193 Internal Audit Progress Report 2020/21

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

Members were pleased to note that all core financial reviews that had been reported had returned a very sound assurance, there were no high priority recommendations and no emerging risks or additional risks that needed to be brought to the attention of the Committee.

It was highlighted to Members that the Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 would continue on a priority basis agreed by the Treasurer however this would not be completed in full and there would be the requirement to roll over two reviews; Safeguarding and Young Firefighters and Volunteering, as it was unlikely that these would be completed during this financial year.

The Head of Internal Audit Shared Service thanked the Treasurer and departments for their support during these challenging times whilst the reviews took place.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

194 Equality & Gender Pay Gap Report 2019/2020

The Head of Community Risk and HR & Development presented Members with the Equality and Gender Pay Gap Report 2019/2020.

It was highlighted to Members that equality reporting arrangements this year had been amended to allow the equality data, including gender pay gap reporting, to be published in one annual report, to provide a more

holistic picture of equality data.

[Cllr A Hardman and Cllr K Pollock entered the meeting at 11.00am]

There was discussion around the reasons staff left the Service and the Assistant Chief Fire Officer provided Members with a brief overview and confirmed to Members that exit interviews were available to all staff and an exit interview strategy was an action on the EDI action plan.

Members queried the benchmark used to judge performance against the equality characteristics. It was suggested it would be more meaningful to use the working age group as the benchmark rather than the whole population of the two counties. Officers agreed to investigate if the data could be accessed.

Members thanked Officers for a well presented report which was easily understood and very comprehensive with a suggestion of using actual numbers rather than percentages to add more meaning.

The EDI Member Champion expressed how impressed she was with the HR Department for their performance and how pleasing it was to note that the Service's minority ethnic proportion was higher than in the two Counties.

Members were asked to approve the publication of the Equality and Gender Pay Gap Report 2019/20 on the Service website and note that the information would also be submitted to the government reporting website as per the Regulations.

RESOLVED that the Authority notes the content of the Equality and Gender Pay Gap Report 2019/2020 and approves its publication.

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

The Head of Community Risk and HR & Development presented Members with a summary of progress for Quarter 2 to 3 2020/21 against the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2020-2025.

Members were made aware that this was the first bi-annual update on progress against the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan which was approved by the Fire Authority on 29 July 2020.

There was discussion around the Safe and Well visits and although Worcestershire was ahead of Herefordshire, Officers confirmed that there were equal resources spread proportionally throughout the two Counties.

There was also discussion around the use of translators and Officers confirmed that existing staff were used for translation where required.

The EDI Member Champion commended the report and the progress made, particularly reporting after a period of Covid which had made initiatives much harder.

RESOLVED that the progress made against the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2020-2025 in Quarter 2 to 3 2020/21 be noted.

196 Health and Safety Committee Update

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented Members with an update on the activities and items of significance from the Service's Health and Safety Committee.

A Member requested clarification of the use of dash cams and was pleased to note that dash cams were fitted to all Service vehicles which have proved invaluable for evidence of incidents and training purposes.

There was concern with the number of vehicle collision figures which Members felt was high. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that each incident is reviewed, investigated and monitored regularly and procedures were in place for drivers to be re-assessed where appropriate. Members were assured that no reported incidents were on blue lights and most were low level and slow moving 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 July to September 2020 (Quarter 2).

The Meeting ended at: 11:36

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman