

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Standards, Audit and Performance Committee
Held in the Beech Room, Headquarters
On Thursday, 27 April 2023 at 2.00 pm**

Present**Members**

Councillors Burchett, Evans (Chair), Hignett, Lea and Price

Officers

Simon Hardiman	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Dan Quinn	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support)	ACFO (SS)
Guy Williams	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery)	ACFO (SD)
Emma Harvey	Solicitor (Telford & Wrekin Council)	Solicitor
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Luke Grant	Station Manager Transformation and Collaboration	SMTC
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Minnery, Overton and Thompson

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

4 Non-Exempt Minutes

Resolved, with Councillors Burchett and Hignett abstaining as they were not present at the meeting, that the minutes of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, held on 1 December 2022, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5 Committee Terms of Reference

This report asked Members to consider the Terms of Reference of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, following the annual review conducted by officers.

Members requested that the word 'normally' be included in the first line of the paragraph related to the Chair so that it reads "*The Chair of the Committee shall **normally** be elected...*" to reflect the amendment agreed at the Annual Meeting in June 2021.

Resolved that the Committee having reviewed its Terms of Reference, as set out at the appendix to the report, recommend them to the Fire Authority for agreement.

6 Review of Member Role Descriptions

This report asked Members to review the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, the Member Champion for Risk Management and Audit and the Fire Authority's Independent Person.

Resolved that the Committee approve the following Role Descriptions as set out in the report:

- Chair of Standards, Audit and Performance Committee
- Vice-Chair of Standards, Audit and Performance Committee
- Member Champion for Risk Management and Audit
- Fire Authority Independent Person

7 Code of Corporate Governance 2022/23

This report gave the Committee an opportunity to make comment on the draft Code of Corporate Governance 2022/23 prior to it going forward to the full Fire Authority for consideration and formal adoption.

Members asked if there is any link between this report and the HMICFRS Values and Cultures report which is a later agenda item on this meeting. The ACFO (SD) advised that there is no link between the two documents and that the Code of Corporate Governance is reviewed annually.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) receive the draft Code of Corporate Governance 2022/23, as attached at the appendix to the report; and
- b) agree to forward the draft Code, without amendment, to the Fire Authority for consideration and formal adoption.

8 Statement of Accounts 2022/23: Review of Accounting Policies

This report presented the accounting policies to be used in the production of the Fire Authority's Statement of Accounts 2022/23, for consideration and approval. The report also stated the areas of estimation uncertainty to the Committee, and what is being done to mitigate the risks around this uncertainty.

The HoF presented this report and advised that the main changes to the accounting policies reflect pension scheme changes and property, plant and equipment. For those areas of the accounts where there is estimation uncertainty, specialist advisors are used to mitigate risks.

The HoF also advised that the approval of accounts process etc has reverted to pre-pandemic timelines.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Approve the accounting policies, prior to the presentation of the Statement of Accounts 2022/23; and
- b) Note the risks associated with estimation uncertainty within the financial statements, and how they are mitigated.

9 Internal Audit Plan from 2023/24

This report informed the Committee of the proposed internal audit plan for 2023/24.

The HoF presented this report and explained that the Service moved to Worcester Internal Audit Shared Service (WIASS) on 1 April 2022. The first year's audit has now been completed and both parties are pleased with how the initial year has gone. The intention is therefore to continue using WIASS as the Service's Internal Auditors in 2023/24. The Authority will then look at joining WIASS as a partner after 2023/24.

Members asked if the 55 days of audit work carried out by WIASS is similar to the amount undertaken by the previous auditors. The HoF confirmed that this is around the normal number of days; although the figure is slightly higher for 2022/23 due to the initial work involved with the move to a new audit provider. The cost of the audit is similar.

Members also asked if there was anything to be carried forward from previous audits. The HoF confirmed that there are some small issues related to the Contract Register which will be carried forward. The Head of Internal Audit will present their Annual report to the July meeting of this Committee.

Resolved that the Committee approve the audit plan proposed for 2023/24.

10 Review of Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy

This report requested the Committee to recommend that the Fire Authority re-affirm the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy, following the annual review conducted by officers.

The HoF presented this report and advised the Committee that there are some minor changes to the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy which relate to the inclusion of strategies and the removal of references to petty cash.

Resolved that the Committee agree to recommend that the Fire Authority re-affirm the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy without amendment.

11 Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2022/23

This report summarised the progress made to date against the improvements contained in the Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2022/23.

Members queried when electronic papers would be introduced for Authority and Committee meetings. The ACFO (SD) confirmed that the intention is to introduce these during the coming year.

Members commented that they feel that there is a lack of information, relating to when and where to progress against the areas of review has been reported to, in the Appendix. The ACFO (SD) agreed that this information would be included in the report going forward and gave some examples of reporting such as building facilities were reported to the Fire Authority and the tender process for the command and control system was taken to Chair's Briefing.

Resolved that the Committee note the progress made on the 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan.

12 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This report updated Members on the status of risks on the Corporate Risk Register.

The ACFO (SD) presented this report and informed the Committee that the risk related to the planned rolling power actions has been amended. The direction of travel for this risk has been reduced as this is a seasonal risk which it is believed has passed for this year.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

13 Performance Monitoring

13a Corporate Performance Indicators including On Call Duty System Performance – April to December 2022 (Quarter 3)

This report presented a summary of the Service's performance from April to December 2022.

Members noted that there was an anomaly on the All Fires graph on page 2 of the report which showed performance to the end of Quarter 4 rather than Quarter 3. The ACFO (SD) undertook to address this in future reports.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

13b Review of Corporate Performance Indicators and Proposed Tolerances for 2023/24

This report presented the agreed Corporate Performance Indicators (CPIs) for 2023/24, as approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 22 March 2023. The report also included the data provided to the Committee to inform its decision making.

The ACFO (SD) presented this report and explained that the tolerances for the CPIs are relatively new and allow monitoring of trends and analysis of data to be undertaken more easily. The ACFO (SD) also commented that the performance reported needs to be assessed against recent changes of lifestyle for the general public and the increased cost of living.

The ACFO (SD) then gave the following narratives for each CPI:

CPI 1 – All Fires

It was agreed that the tolerance for this CPI be maintained as it is believed that this is accurate and relevant. There is a 2.5% increase in performance predicted in this report for the year, although the actual figures may be slightly higher than what is predicted.

CPI 2 – Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)

It was agreed that the 10% tolerance for this CPI be retained. The prediction is that performance against this CPI is plateauing, although actual figures may increase, however, performance still sits within the tolerance levels.

CPI 3 Deliberate Fires

It was agreed that the tolerance for this CPI be maintained as it is predicted that there will be a drop in actual figures again this year. There was a 'spike' in incident numbers in Quarter 3 that was related to organised crime.

CPI 4 - Fire Related Deaths and Serious Injuries

There is no tolerance set for this CPI as the Service aspires to zero fire deaths and serious injuries in each year.

CPI 5 – Fires Confined to Room of Origin

The recommendations that the 2% tolerance for this indicator be maintained was agreed. This CPI is a useful metric which allows the Service to assess how effective its Prevention, Protection and Response activities are. As the numbers relating to this CPI are relatively low, it is possible for each incident to be challenged for details. It is also positive that there has been very little change in the percentage performance across the last five years.

CPI 6 – Injuries sustained to Staff through Operational Activity

There is no tolerance set for this CPI as the Service aspires to zero staff injuries through operational activity in each year.

CPI 7 – Response Standard monitored against Urban, Town & Fringe and Rural Categories

Performance monitoring for this CPI will remain the same with the Service monitoring against each of the three areas of Urban, Town & Fringe and Rural and comparing performance for each one independently against the figure of 85%. The Service will continue to report on and challenge those instances where the set standards are not met.

CPI 8 – Fires in Regulated Buildings

There was no tolerance applied to this CPI in 2022/23 as this was a new indicator for the year. There has been a large reduction in instances across the year with a predicted 18% drop in the total number of incidents for 2022/23. It was agreed that a 5% tolerance be introduced for this CPI.

CPI 9 – Diversity, Establishment and Firefighter Competence

It was agreed an attainment rate of 90% will continue to be applied to each of the skill sets in firefighter competence. Establishment and Diversity figures will continue to be reported to this Committee on a six-monthly basis with internal monitoring being undertaken by the Service's Performance and Risk Group.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note the report and acknowledge the work undertaken to determine the Corporate Performance Indicators for 2023/24; and
- b) Note the agreed Corporate Performance Indicators for 2023/24, as set out in the report.

13c HMICFRS Values and Cultures Report: Recommendations and Approach

This report presented the Service's approach and action plan to the recommendations made to the sector in the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Values and Culture in the Fire and Rescue Services report.

The ACFO (SD) introduced the Station Manager Transformation and Collaboration who presented and talked through report.

The SMTC explained that since the publication of the report, the Service has undertaken a gap analysis on the contents of the HMICFRS report and that the Service Management Team has met and accepted the report. A weekly Implementation Board has been established to steer and monitor progress against the actions falling out from the report. Some elements of the report's recommendations have already been addressed by the Service. Equality Impact Assessments will be implemented after recommendations have been completed.

The CFO explained that there are 20 recommendations in the report that are applicable to fire and rescue services. Officers however felt that there were no surprises in the report which was comforting. The CFO also provided assurance that the report has been given the credence and attention it deserves, for example staff are being recruited to support the work generated from the recommendations. The CFO also advised that he is to meet with the Chief Constable regarding the recommendations related to rehabilitation of offenders and notifications related to staff.

Members requested, and officers agreed, that an update on this report would be brought to the next meeting of this Committee, with a report on the progress of the recommendations being taken to the full Fire Authority meeting in June.

The CFO commented that there is press and media interest in the report findings and there is a feeling that the 35 recommendations may form the basis of the HMICFRS' Stage 3 inspection.

The Service undertook a Women's Safety Survey after the Sarah Everad case; one of the findings from this was that an independent and confidential reporting line was needed for employees to raise concerns. The CFO advised that contract for this Service has been signed today.

The Committee confirmed that they understood the need for confidentiality in relation to some of the issues concerned but there is also a need for Members to have assurance about the progress that is being made towards meeting the report's recommendations. Members also commented that this is an area where they would hope that the Service would not be found wanting.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

14 Standards

14a Ethical Standards Framework

This report dealt with ethical framework matters, namely a review of the following documents: Members Code of Conduct; Arrangements for dealing with Complaints against Members; Disclosable Pecuniary Interests; and Process for seeking a Dispensation.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note the report and the reviews undertaken by Officers; and
- b) Agree the following documents as appended to the report;
 - Members Code of Conduct
 - Arrangements for dealing with complaints against Members
 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests Form
 - Process for seeking a Dispensation

14b Code of Conduct Complaints 2022/23

Resolved that the Committee note that, whilst not a legal requirement, it is good practice for Members to receive regular updates on Code of Conduct complaints, even if there have been none. The ESO reported that, during the period 2021/22, the Fire Authority had received no complaints that any of its Members had breached its Code of Conduct

Member Development

15 Member Development 2022/23 and 2023/24

This report updated the Committee on Member development activity over the past year and proposed training and development activity for the year April 2023 to March 2024.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note the backward-looking report for 2022/23; and
- b) Agree the proposed training and development activity for 2023/24.

Pension Board

16a 25 November 2022

Resolved that the Committee receive and note the minutes of the Pension Board meeting, held on 25 November 2022.

16b 16 March 2023

Resolved that the Committee receive and note the minutes of the Pension Board meeting, held on 16 March 2023.

17 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a to the Local Government Act 1972

18 Exempt Minutes (Paragraph 4)

Resolved, with Councillors Burchett and Hignett abstaining as they were not present at the meeting, that the exempt minutes of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, held on 1 December 2022, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

19 Corporate Risk Management Summary (Paragraph 4)

Resolved that the Committee receive and note exempt Appendix B to report 12 – Corporate Risk Management Summary

The meeting closed at 3.05 pm

Chair _____

Date _____