

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
Standards, Audit and Performance Committee  
Held in the Oak Room, Headquarters  
On Thursday, 1 December 2022 at 2.00 pm**

**Present****Members**

Councillors Evans (Chair), Lea, Minnery (Vice-Chair) and Price

**Officers**

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer (for item 14)	CFO
Simon Hardiman	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) (for item 14)	ACFO (SS)
Dan Quinn	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery)	ACFO (SD)
Richard Phillips	Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer	Clerk
James Walton	Treasurer	
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Ged Edwards	Planning and Programme Manager	PPM
Jan Morris	Head of Transformation and Collaboration	HoTC
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

**External Audit**

Avtar Sohal	Key Audit Manager, Grant Thornton
David Rowley	Audit Manager, Grant Thornton

**Internal Audit**

Andy Bromage	Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Services
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**1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Burchett, Hignett, Overton and Thompson

**2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None

**3 Public Questions**

None

## 4 Minutes

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, held on 30 September 2022, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 5 Standards, Audit and Performance Committee Work Plan

This report put forward a 2023 Work Plan for the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee for consideration and approval by Members. The report also reviewed implementation of the activities listed in last year's Work Plan.

**Resolved** that the Committee approve the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee Work Plan 2023, attached at the Appendix to the report, without amendment.

## 6 Statement of Accounts 2021/22

This report presented the completed Statement of Accounts to the Committee, for consideration and approval.

The HoF presented this report and advised the Committee that both the Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 and the Audit of them have been completed. The deadline for the publication of final audited accounts is 30 November and whilst this has been exceeded by one day, this does not affect the Committee's ability to approve the accounts.

The HoF explained that Appendix B to the report sets out the Balance Sheet Movements for those areas where there has been a greater than 10% change. The HOF also advised that there have been no major changes arising from the audit of the accounts.

Members asked for further explanation of the increase in levels of stock held and the decrease in investments held. The HoF clarified that stock levels have increased to address supply chain issues and the decrease in investments held is due to the Authority having less money available to invest as it uses its reserves to fund capital projects.

The Committee agreed that its appreciation to the Finance Team for their work on the Statement of Accounts be noted.

**Resolved** that the Committee

- a) Approve the Statement of Accounts 2021/22 (subject to final auditor amendment); and
- b) Delegate final amendments following completion of the audit to the Head of Finance, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee.

## 7 External Audit

### Audit Findings Report for Year Ended 31 March 2022

Mr Sohal presented the Audit Findings Report for the year ended 31 March 2022 and highlighted the following points

- The audit opinion should be signed off tomorrow once final confirmation of investments held is received
- An unqualified audit opinion will be given with no modifications
- A few errors have been identified during the audit, but these have been addressed as they have arisen
- This is one of the only authorities to be signed off at this point in time so are in a very fortunate position
- The Action Plan at Appendix A of the report sets out four recommendations that have arisen from issues identified during the audit
  - one of these relates to the useful economic lives of assets but is not a major issue
  - the Authority's inventory value has increased and had therefore needed more detailed audit procedures than previously. Issues have been identified in relation to stock-taking processes, but it is not thought that these will lead to materiality issues. However, processes do need to be correct going forward to ensure that qualification is avoided in future years.

Members asked how the introduction of stock control procedures was progressing. The ACFO (SD) explained that this project is in the early stages of project management, but it has been approved and will be considered by the Service's Programme Board. It is hoped that the solution should be in place during 2023/24. The HoF added that it is hoped that there will be something in place by the end of this financial year, but this will be dealt with, with the auditors, as needed.

In response to a Member query regarding the cybersecurity issues that are mentioned on page 21 of the report, Mr Sohal advised that cybersecurity work is always ongoing, but nothing has been identified that would affect the final statements or cause materiality. The HoF advised that the budget setting paper which went to Strategy & Resources Committee in November includes cybersecurity as an item in the base budget for next year. The PPM added that cybersecurity is covered in paper 8 on this agenda and is included on the Corporate Risk Register. Prior to the pandemic, the focus was on security of systems at Headquarters, but the focus is now more on security related to remote working.

Regarding item 7b, Mr Sohal advised that this is the draft audit opinion wording. The audit cannot be concluded until the Value for Money opinion is completed. The Auditors have extra time to complete this and this will be done in the next three months.

The Committee requested that its appreciation for the work undertaken by External Audit be noted.

**Resolved** that the Committee formally adopt the Audit Findings Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2022.

## **8 Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 Improvement Plan**

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

The PPM presented this report and highlighting the section on building facilities in the Appendix to the report, advised the Committee that there is likely to be some slippage in the Telford Central refurbishment project.

Members requested an update on the On Call Sustainability Project (OCSP) which is due to commence in 2023. The ACFO (SD) explained that Service needs to support the OCSP with a Project Manager who will review the draft recommendations that have come out of the initial review. Any changes to these recommendations that are fundamental to service delivery will be brought to the Fire Authority for consideration. The ACFO (SD) also advised that the Service still has the ambition to implement the OCSP but the viability of it will need to be reassessed after the financial statement is confirmed by the Government.

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

## **9 Corporate Risk Management Summary**

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

The PPM presented the report and advised that two new risks have been added to the Corporate Risk Register since the last update to this Committee. The two new risks relate to clinical governance and to power outages.

The Service is reviewing its contingency arrangements for power outages as a continuous power supply is required for communications equipment etc on the appliances. Members asked if the Service are talking to energy suppliers to ensure that it is not included on any planned rotated power outages.

The ACFO (SD) explained that the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) has recently undertaken an exercise in relation to this issue which was based on a national piece of work to ensure preparedness for CAT 1 and CAT 2 emergency responders. Following this exercise, the Service are assured as part of the business continuity. National Grid attended the exercise and Officers emphasised the critical nature of this service and its business to them.

There were a few areas identified because of the exercise which the Service and its emergency partners need to review, this includes how communications would be dealt with in this situation. The LRF is committed to designing a Business Continuity Plan for all partners in the area to deal with this situation. There is a level of confidence that the Service would manage if power outages do occur.

The Committee also asked for an explanation of clinical governance and how it relates to the Fire Service. The ACFO (SD) explained that the Service has a duty to train its members of staff in first aid response. In addition to this, the Service must also have a level of governance in place to ensure that the medical interventions its staff make, meet the required standard. Some gaps have been identified in the clinical governance process and the Service Management Team has approved a six-month trial of clinical governance with Meducate, with the aim of addressing these gaps.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the report.

## **Performance Monitoring**

### **10 Corporate Performance Indicators including On Call Duty System Performance - April to September 2022 (Quarter 2)**

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

The HoTC presented this report and gave the following updates

#### **Corporate Performance Indicator (CPI) 1 – All Fires**

There have been 699 incidents in the year to date (YTD). This is slightly over the target for this point in the year but is attributable to hot weather and therefore it is anticipated that numbers will level out through the year.

#### **CPI2 – Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)**

There was an unprecedented reduction in ADFs last year which has skewed the figures for this year as projections are based on previous years' figures.

#### **CPI 3 – Deliberate Fires**

Performance for this CPI is within tolerance levels although there has been an increase in incidents due to the spell of hot, dry weather

#### **CPI 4 – Fire Related Deaths and Serious Injuries**

There have been no fire related deaths or serious injuries in Quarter 2 of the year.

#### **CPI 5 – Fires confined to Room of Origin**

Cumulative performance for this CPI is 87% for YTD. This is marginally above where the Service wants to be, but the indicator does seem to be on track.

### **CPI 6 – Injuries sustained to staff through Operational Activity**

There have been two RIDDOR reportable injuries in Quarter which involved absences of over seven days.

### **CPI 7 – Response Standard**

The average response standard at the end of September 2022 was 92% across the three areas of urban, town and fringe, and rural.

### **CPI 8 – Fires in Regulated Buildings**

In YTD, there have been 42 incidents; this number in line with Service expectations for this indicator

### **CPI 9 – Establishment, Diversity and Firefighter Competence**

The figures for this CPI have remained fairly static during the reporting period.

### **On Call Performance**

There has been a slight drop in average On Call performance in the year to date. The Service is monitoring performance and is working to identify the reasons for this decrease.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report.

## **Standards**

### **11a Appointment of Independent Persons**

This report updated the Committee on the recruitment activity which the Monitoring Officer has undertaken in respect of recruitment of two new Independent Persons for both Telford & Wrekin Council and the Fire Authority. The Committee is asked to recommend the appointment of the preferred candidates to the role of Independent Persons for the Fire Authority.

The Clerk presented this report and advised that one of the recommendations made by the Committee for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) was that authorities should look to appoint at least two Independent Persons to assist the Monitoring Officer with consideration of standards issues. The Authority's current Independent Person, who is shared with Telford & Wrekin Council has been in place for 12 years, which exceeds the CSPL's recommendation that Independent Persons should serve for a maximum period of eight years. To address this, the Monitoring Officer has undertaken a recruitment process and the two candidates detailed in the report have been identified as being suitable for appointment.

**Resolved** that the Committee

- a) Note the recruitment exercise which has taken place; and
- b) Agree to recommend to the Fire Authority that the appointments of Thomas Senior and Julia Lynch as Independent Persons for the Fire Authority be approved for an initial period of four years.

## **11b Ethical Framework Matters**

This report was deferred to the next meeting of this Committee.

## **Pension Board**

### **12a Annual Report 2022**

**Resolved** that the Committee receive and note the Pension Board Annual Report 2022

### **12b Pension Board Minutes**

This item was deferred to the next meeting of this Committee.

## **13 Exclusion of Press and Public**

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

## **14 Corporate Risk Management Summary (Paragraph 4)**

**Resolved** that the Committee receive and note exempt Appendix B to Report 9 – Corporate Risk Management Summary.

The meeting closed at 2.50 pm

**Chair** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_