

AT A MEETING of the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee held at
Fire & Police HQ, Eastleigh on Wednesday 27th September, 2023

Chairman:

* Councillor Derek Mellor

* Councillor David Harrison

Councillor Karen Lucioni

* Councillor David Drew

* Councillor Hugh Lumby

97. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Karen Lucioni.

98. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful of their duty to disclose at the meeting any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest they had in any matter on the agenda for the meeting, where that interest was not already in the Authority's register of interests, and their ability to disclose any other personal interests in any such matter that they might have wished to disclose.

99. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed and agreed.

100. **DEPUTATIONS**

There were no deputations for the meeting.

101. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no formal announcements.

102. **ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Financial Officer (item 6 in the minute book) on the annual Statement of Accounts.

The officer summarised the report, highlighting that the audit had not been completed due to national challenges in the local audit market that have resulted in a significant backlog in audit opinions. The statement however, was published in time and so the Authority remained in a good position.

During questions, the following points were clarified to Members:

- Non-financial performance was required to be included and enabled both and financial aspects to be assessed together.

- The pensions reserve included an accountability adjustment, but this was the same as had been previously notified to Committee.

RESOLVED

a) The unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 (Appendix 1) was approved by the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee

b) Authority was agreed to be delegated to the Chief Financial Officer to approve minor changes to the Statement of Accounts agreed with the auditors prior to publication of the audited accounts. Should any non-minor changes be required as a result of the audit of the accounts, the Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 would be brought back to the Standards and Governance Committee to review and re-approve.

c) It was noted that the cause of the delayed audit of the accounts was due to issues outside the control of the Authority resulting from the backlog in local audit opinions across the country.

d) It was noted that the Authority would publish the unaudited accounts on its website together with a notice in accordance with regulation 10(2)(a) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 stating that it had not been possible to publish the audited statement of accounts and the reasons for this.

e) It was noted that the Letter of Representations would be signed by the Chairman of the Standards and Governance Committee and Chief Financial Officer as required by the external auditor at the conclusion of the audit.

103. **ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2022/2023**

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Fire Officer (item 7 in the minute book), which was a retrospective look back at financial, governance and operational matters that formed the Assurance Statement.

It was highlighted that vacancies were managed by the Resource Management Team, which considered all aspects of resource management and staff wellbeing to ensure teams were appropriately supported and to maximise availability. It also included developing new and innovative ways of recruiting and maintaining On Call staff.

The Statement would be used as reference by the Home Office and was completed by all Fire Services'.

Members congratulated officers on a clear and concise report.

RESOLVED

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service Annual Assurance Statement 2022/2023 was approved by the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee.

104. **ORGANISATIONAL RISK REGISTER REPORT**

The Committee received a report from the Chief Fire Officer (item 8 in the minute book), which updates Members on the status of the Organisational Risk Register in line with the Risk Management Procedure.

The report was summarised by the officer, with changes to risks being highlighted to the Committee. Cyber attacks were being taken seriously at a national level and the Service had processes in place to help mitigate risks related to these.

RESOLVED

The risks identified and captured in the Service's Organisational Risk Register were noted by the Standards and Governance Committee.

105. **ASSURANCE REPORT: FIRE STANDARDS AND HMICFRS AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Committee received a report from the Chief Fire Officer (item 9 in the minute book), which provided Members with an assurance update on the Service's progress in adopting and embedding Fire Standards within the Service and also on the progress being made against the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Areas for Improvement (AFIs).

Following a summary of the report and work that had taken place, Members asked questions of the officer and learned that:

- Benchmarking was set by a Director or Head of Service sponsor and a collective view from another department.
- Operational Standards were separate to professional guidance and tackled different things.
- Some areas for improvement would likely be in progress in the medium to longer term, but a lot of work was going on behind the scenes to enable progress to be embedded as soon as possible.

RESOLVED

a) The Service's approach to the four AFIs identified as not having a specific improvement plan was approved by the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee.

b) The HMICFRS AFI and Fire Standards update report was noted by the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee.

106. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report from the Chief Internal Auditor (item 10 in the minute book), which provided an overview of internal audit work completed in accordance with the approved audit plans, and the status of 'live' reports.

There had been some slippage in work due to resourcing, but overall the report was a very positive reflection on the Service. Purchasing cards listed on section 4 of the appendix was an action that had since been completed and would be removed ahead of the next update to Committee.

RESOLVED

The progress in delivering the internal audit plan for 2023/24 and the outcomes to date were noted by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Authority Standards and Governance Committee.

107. INTERNAL AUDIT MANAGEMENT ACTIONS PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report from the Chief Internal Audit (item 11 in the minute book), which provided the latest update on the medium and high management actions that had not been completed within their target date and their status.

Members were happy with the report and there were no questions.

RESOLVED

The Standards and Governance Committee noted the progress made towards the implementation of the internal audit management actions and the delivery of the audit plan.

Chairman,