
CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

26 JUNE 2026

PRESENT:

CHAIR - Councillor Jim Beall - Stockton Borough Council
MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
Councillor John Kabuye
REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL
Councillor Steve Kay
STOCKTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
Councillor John Gardner
INDEPENDENT PERSONS
Mr Steve Harwood
AUTHORISED OFFICERS
Interim Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Treasurer
Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer,
ACFO - Strategic Planning, People & Resources
Temporary ACFO - Service Delivery
BRIGADE OFFICERS
Fire Safety Enforcement Manager (Observing)
AUDITORS
Jack Brown - Audit Manager, Forvis Mazars
Noel Adamson – Head of Internal Audit, Hartlepool Borough Council

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Treasurer
Head of Risk & Performance
Head of Finance & Procurement
Dennis Hall – Independent Person
Councillors Leisa Smith, Christine Wiley – Hartlepool Borough Council
Councillor Naweed Hussain – Middlesbrough Council
Councillors Stefan Houghton, Andrew Sherris – Stockton Borough Council

13. DECLARATION OF MEMBER'S INTERESTS

It was noted no Declarations of Interest were submitted to the meeting.

14. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee held on 20 February 2026 be confirmed.

14. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

14.1 Forward Work Programme 2026/27

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Strategic Planning, People & Resources (ACFO-SPPR) outlined the Forward Work Programme for 2026/27, as detailed at Appendix 1, in accordance with the requirements of the Authority's Standing Orders.

14.1 Forward Work Programme 2026/27 cont.

She noted that the Forward Work Programme will remain flexible to allow consideration of additional items should they arise.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Work Programme 2026/27 be approved.

14.2 Organisational Performance & Efficiency Report 2025/26 (Q4)

Members received a presentation which covered the following key areas of performance for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026:-

Actual Demand

Fire Control Calls – 15,744 (+19% compared to the 5 year average)

Mobilisations – 15,429 (+15% compared to the 5 year average)

Incidents attended – 11,042 (+18% compared to the 5 year average)

Safer Homes Visits – 16,958 completed (-12% compared to the 5 year average)

Industrial and Commercial Audits – 256 RBIP Audits, 193 reactive audits, 131 low risk audits

Casualties – 3 fire fatalities, 9 fire injuries, 10 RTC fatalities, 172 serious injuries.

All Incidents – From April 2025 to March 2026 the Service have attended 11,042 incidents. +1,382 compared to the previous year and +1,717 compared to the 5 year average. CFB were the highest rate nationally in 2024/25 and second highest in 2023/24. This increase is mainly as a result in the increase of secondary fires (+28% to 2024/25 and +30% against the 5 year average).

Primary Fires – In Q4 there have been 984 primary fire incidents. Compared to the previous year this is an increase of +82 (9%), +126 (+15%) compared to the 5 year average and +126 (+15%) compared to the set target of 858. Nationally CFB have increased from fourth highest on 2023/24 to third highest in 2024/25. Primary fires remain predominantly vehicle fires with 46% of incidents followed by dwelling fires, 30%. There has been an average of 28 arson related incidents involving vehicles per month. 33% occurring in the Stockton district.

Secondary Fires – In Q4 we have attended 4,956 secondary fires. Compared to the previous year this is an increase of 1,077 (28%). +914 (23%) compared to target (4,042) and +1,155 (+30%) compared to the 5 year average. Cleveland remained the highest nationally in 2024/25. 56% of all secondary fires involved refuse in 2025/26. In the same period the previous year, 74% of secondary fires related to refuse. 35% (1,710) of these incidents occurred in Redcar and Cleveland with an increase of 44% from the previous year.

Accidental Dwelling Fires – 213 ADF incidents in Q4. +45 (+27%) compared to 2024/25, +30 (+16%) compared to the 5 year average and +42 (+25%) compared to set target of 171). CFB remained in the lowest quartile during 2024/25 with the fifth lowest rate nationally. Stockton experienced the highest proportion of ADFs with 66 incidents (31% of all ADFs). 10% of incidents involved drugs and alcohol. 45% of the properties involved were recorded as having no smoke alarm and 23% of all ADF incidents were deemed to be caused by electrical faults followed by cooking related (22%) with 92 (43%) starting in the kitchen.

14.2 Organisational Performance & Efficiency Report 2025/26 (Q4) cont.

Safer Homes Visits – 16,958 visits completed in Q4. This is a reduction of -4,839 (-22%) when compared to the previous year, -2,399 (-12%) compared to the 5 year average and -6,310 (-27%) compared to target. 88% of SHVs were completed by Operational Crews (14,978) a reduction of 22% compared to the previous year. 11% of SHVs led to referrals to other agencies or providing risk reduction equipment.

Deliberate Fires – In Q4 4,925 Deliberate fires have occurred. +874 (+22%) compared to 2024/25, +953 (+24%) compared to the 5 year average and +826 (+20%) compared to the 4,099 target. Both deliberate primary and secondary fires have increased year on year by 2% and 24% respectively. On average a total of 410 deliberate fire incidents have occurred per month during 2025/26 with deliberate vehicle fires remaining the highest cause. CFB remained the highest nationally during 2024/25.

Industrial & Commercial Audits – 580 audits completed in Q4 with 256 audits completed from the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP), 193 reactive audits and 131 low risk audits completed. CFB had the fifth highest rate of Fire Safety Audits nationally in 2024/25. 256 of 1270 audits from the RBIP have been completed. 94% of audits were deemed unsatisfactory.

All Staff Sickness – 10.96 duty days were lost to sickness in Q4. Compared to 2024/25 this is -0.13 (-1%), -0.50 (-4%) compared to the 5 year average and +0.41 (+4%) compared to target. Main causes of sickness are 34% Musculo skeletal, 30% mental health and 7% cancer and tumours. Sickness has reduced in all staff groups apart from Green Book sickness increasing year on year when compared to the 5 year average. Sickness has also increased for On Call compared to the previous year, however it has reduced against the 5 year average. 55% of sickness is classed as long term.

Sickness: By Staff Group

Wholetime – 10.32 duty shifts/person (3,373 duty days) lost. 50.2% being long term sickness. Compared to the previous year we have seen a decrease of -1.81 (-15%), -2.00 (-16%) compared to the 5 year average and -0.79 (-7%) compared to target.

On Call – 5.65 duty shifts/person (507 duty days) lost. +2.03 compared to 2024/25, -2.58 compared to target and -0.87 (-13%) compared to target. 73% being long term sickness.

Fire Control – 12.72 shifts lost. We have seen a decrease of -1.17 (-8%) compared to 2024/25, a decrease of -1.70 (+12%) compared to the 5 year average and an increase of +0.91 (+8%) compared to target. 53% of sickness due to long term absence.

Green Book – 16.98 shifts lost due to sickness, +3.62 (+27%) compared to the previous year, +4.52 (+36%) compared to the 5 year average and +3.07 (+22%) compared to target. 72% of sickness is long term.

Health and Safety: Accidents Resulting in Injury – 33 injuries in Q4. Compared to the previous year we have seen an increase of +5 (+18%), an increase of +5 (+18%) compared to the 5 year average and an increase of +7 (+27%) compared to target. 8 RIDDOR reported in Q4 which is an increase of +1 from last year, +2 compared to the 5 year average and +8 against target. 14 incidents occurred during routine activities, 11 whilst undertaking training and 7 at incidents. 1 was categorised as 'other'. Main causes were mainly due to human error, manual handling and environmental factors.

14.2 Organisational Performance & Efficiency Report 2025/26 (Q4) cont.

Health and Safety: Violence to Staff (VTS) – In Q4 there were 31 VTS incidents. +9 (+28%) compared to 2024/25, +4 (+11%) compared to target (37) and -6 (-13%) compared to the 5 year average. 39% of incidents involved objects being thrown at firefighters / appliances and of these incidents 15% occurred within the Ormesby Ward and 12% in the Hardwick Ward. 1 VTS incident was recorded in Holme House Prison.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and Councillors asked whether the recent heatwave had impacted demand. Officers confirmed there had been an increase in refuse fires and Station Managers were ensuring resources were visible in these areas. Members asked why East Cleveland had a slower response time compared to other areas. Officers confirmed that overall, Cleveland's response times were excellent and when compared Nationally our residents get a much quicker response. The rural aspect of East Cleveland the fact it is covered by On-Call stations rather than Whole Time has an impact on response times. Officers assured the Committee that while the ultimate solution would be to build a wholetime station in East Cleveland, which was not affordable, crews are often on standby in the area which reduces response times.

The Independent Person asked whether any of the 8 RIDDOR accidents reported were the result of an RTC and if RTCs were included in the RIDDOR figures. Officers confirmed that if the accident occurred as an RTC while at work it would be recorded and agreed to split RIDDOR incidents into accident / reportable for the next meeting.

Councillor Kabuye referred to the recent fire on Linthorpe Road and passed on thanks from the business community for the speed and professionalism of crews to contain the fire. He also asked why Safer Homes Visits (SHVs) were lower than target. Officers confirmed that the target was very high before and has been adjusted to allow crews to spend time with vulnerable people which gives more time to recognise risks and make referrals were necessary.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

14.3 Review of Targets 2025/26

Members received an overview of the Brigade's performance against targets for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 which was summarised as:

Safer Stronger Communities	19 of 45 targeted indicators were met (42%)
Professional Proud Passionate People	4 of 24 targeted indicators were met (17%)
Efficient, Sustainable Resources	6 of 10 targeted indicators were met (60%)

The ACFO-SPPR noted that these targets related to the CRMP 2022-26 and overall the 2025/26 performance against targets is mixed. The majority of targeted indicators have not achieved the expected level of performance, although more than half are within agreed tolerance levels.

She added that while some areas show stronger performance such as response standards and financial indicators, alongside some protection measures. However, service demand particularly for secondary fires remains a challenge as does on-call availability, sickness absence, and equality, diversity and inclusion outcomes.

RESOLVED – That the Review of Targets 2025/26 be noted.

14.4 Internal Audit Progress Report

The Head of Internal Audit (HoIA) presented the audits undertaken to date and highlighted the outcomes relating to limited/satisfactory assurance. He confirmed that:

- 13 audits have been completed and scored satisfactory
- 1 audit (Secondary Employment / Working Time Regulations) was given no assurance but is on track to achieve full assurance by end of August 2026.
- 1 audit (National Fraud Initiative) still in the fieldwork stage

The HoIA confirmed that this was positive report which reflected the Internal Audit Outcome Report for 2025/26 at Min. No. 16.1. He reminded Members that it was important for them to monitor this report and ensure the recommendations are implemented in a timely manner.

The Chair confirmed that it was reassuring for the Committee to see this programme and the assurance given.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the progress made against the 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 Internal Audit Plans.

14.5 Review of the Corporate Risk Register

The ACFO-SPPR presented the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) which identifies the strategic threats and risks to the achievement of the Authority's vision and evaluates the risk and summarises the control measures identified to reduce these risks.

The CRR was reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) in June 2026 to ensure it reflects the current situation regarding existing and potential risks the Brigade could face. The following changes were agreed:

Risk Score Revisions

- Financial Pressures (increase)
- Cyber Attack (increase)
- Loss of Public Confidence (increase)

Risk Removal

- CFBRMS C.I.C.
- Multi Agency Coordination System
- Airwave to ESN

RESOLVED – That the Corporate Risk Register be noted.

14.6 Staff Culture Survey 2026: Detailed Analysis Report

Members received the results of the 2026 Staff Culture Survey which had received 217 responses from 552 employees which was a 39% response rate and an increase from 28% last year.

The ACFO-SPPR provided a summary of the key findings and emerging themes and noted that while the questions related only to the past 12 month it was felt some of the answers were relating to older issues. She noted that changing an organisation's culture can take 15 years and it was important for staff to know that they had the commitment of senior leadership to benchmark the responses and strive for continuous improvements.

14.6 Staff Culture Survey 2026: Detailed Analysis Report cont.

The ACFO-SPPR informed Members that this had been shared with trade unions and the next step would be to hold a dedicated session with the Brigade's Leaders Forum to design an action plan to share with the wider workforce.

Members thanked officers for sharing the positive report and agreed to receive the action plan once it had been established.

RESOLVED – That the findings of the Culture Survey 2026: Detailed analysis report at Appendix 1 be noted and the associated action plan be brought to a future meeting of the Audit & Governance Committee.

15. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

15.1 Internal Audit Outturn Report 2025/26

The Head of Internal Audit (HoIA) reported the outcomes of the audit work covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. He confirmed that the systems reviewed annually by Internal Audit have provided consistently high assurance of an effective and satisfactory audit provision. This was with the exception of 'Secondary Employment / Working Time Regulations' which had been assessed as a no assurance audit but this risk was now adequately mitigated.

He gave assurance that the Authority already had good risk management in place and areas for improvement were highlighted in Appendix A.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16.1 Retirement of Head of Internal Audit

The Chair informed Members that Mr Noel Adamson would be retiring from his role as Head of Internal Audit and this was his last meeting with the Committee. He wished him well for his retirement and on behalf of the Authority thanked him for his many years public service working closely with the Authority. Mr Adamson thanked the Authority for the support he had received.

COUNCILLOR JIM BEALL
CHAIR