
CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING



22 AUGUST 2025

- PRESENT:**
- CHAIR:-** Councillor Jim Beall - Stockton Borough Council
 - MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL**
Councillor John Kabuye
 - STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**
Councillors Stefan Houghton, Andrews Sherris, John Gardner
 - REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL**
Councillor Steve Kay
 - HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL**
Councillor Christopher Wallace
 - INDEPENDENT PERSONS**
Mr Steve Harwood
 - AUTHORISED OFFICERS**
ACFO - Director of Strategic Planning, People & Resources
ACFO - Director of Service Delivery
Treasurer
 - BRIGADE OFFICERS**
Area Manager - Assistant Director of Prevention, Protection & Planning
Assistant Director Governance & Assurance
Risk & Performance Officer
 - AUDITOR - FORVIS MAZARS**
Mr James Collins - Audit Engagement Lead
- APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**
- Councillor Naweed Hussain- Middlesbrough Council
 - Chief Fire Officer
 - Legal Advisor & Monitoring Officer
 - Mr Jack Brown - Forvis Mazars

- 28. CFBRMS C.I.C. UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR**
The Chair confirmed that a special Audit & Governance Committee meeting would be scheduled later in the year to look at the lessons learned in relation to the recent liquidation of Cleveland Fire Brigade Risk Management Services Community Interest Company (CFBRMS C.I.C.) to ensure future risks to the Authority are minimised.
- 29. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS**
It was noted no Declarations of Interest were submitted to the meeting.
- 30. MINUTES**
RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee held on 27 June 2025 be confirmed.

31. REPORT OF FORVIS MAZARS

31.1 Audit Strategy Memorandum 2024/25

The Chair welcomed James Collins, Audit Engagement Lead (AEL) to the meeting.

The AEL referred to the Audit Strategy Memorandum and stated that it is based on draft accounts at present, therefore, an additional report may need to be brought to a future Committee, once the accounts are prepared.

The report covered the following:

- Engagement & Responsibilities - these have not changed from previous years.
- Auditing Team - this is subject to change dependent on staffing within Forvis Mazars.
- Audit Scope, Approach & Timeline - risk assessment figures are based on previous years and will be updated.
- Significant Risks - the AEL highlighted the liquidation of CFBRMS CIC as a significant weakness in arrangements which may require additional work to establish the financial impact on the Authority.
- Value for Money - the AEL outlined the framework and approach and highlighted a key change in the 2024 Code of Practice requiring draft Auditors Annual Report for year ending 31 March 2025 to now be issued by 30 November 2025, regardless of whether the Audit is complete.
- Audit fees and other services - proposed fee of £106,720 for 2024/25 which represents an 11% increase from 2023/24 (£96,153). This may increase dependent on additional work needed in relation to CFBRMS C.I.C.
- Confirmation of Independence

Councillor Kay referred to the audit timescales within the report and asked whether they were achievable. The AEL confirmed that Members will receive an update in February 2026, with a caveat around potential additional work relating to CFBRMS C.I.C. The Treasurer highlighted a potential risk with information gathering of CFBRMS C.I.C. as all information for the accounts as of 31 March 2025 may not be obtainable, which will have an impact on the reporting.

The AEL also confirmed that that 2023/24 Audit Certificate has now been published.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

32. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

32.1 Organisational Performance & Efficiency Report – 2025/26 (Q1)

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Director of Strategic Planning, People and Resources (ACFO-DSPPR) introduced the report and handed over to the Risk and Performance Officer (R&PO).

The R&PO gave a presentation outlining the performance of the Brigade for the period 1 April to 30 June 2025, which had been aligned to the Brigade's strategic goals, aims and associated outcomes.

32.1 Organisational Performance & Efficiency Report – 2025/26 (Q1) cont.

The presentation highlighted the following key performance:

Actual Demand

- Fire Control Calls – 5,262 (+48% compared to the 5-year average)
- Mobilisations – 4,949 (+40% compared to the 5-year average)
- Incidents attended – 3,755 (+49% compared to the 5-year average)
- Safer Homes Visits – 4,336 completed / 6,165 interventions (-7% compared to the 5-year average)
- Industrial and Commercial Audits – 62 (+95 attempted) and 56 reactive audits completed 557
- Casualties – 0 fire fatalities, 5 fire injuries, 3 RTC fatalities, 45 RTC serious injuries.
- All Incidents – From April 2024 to June 2025 the Brigade have attended 3,755 incidents. This is an increase of +1,459 (+64%) compared to the same period the previous year. There has also been an increase of +1,238 (+49%) compared to the 5-year average. Cleveland rated second highest for all incidents nationally in 2023/2024 and highest in 2024/25.
- Primary Fires – In Q1 there has been 330 primary fires which is an increase of +115 (+53%) compared to the previous year. +101 (+40%) compared to the 5-year average and +109 (+49%) against the Brigades set target of 221. Cleveland have increased from the fourth highest in 2023/24 to the third highest in 2024/25 nationally. 45% (150 incidents) of primary fires relate to vehicle fires followed by dwelling fires (28% / 91 incidents).
- Secondary Fires – 2,064 in Q1. Compared to the 5-year average this is an increase of +928 (+82%). +1179 (+133%) compared to the previous year and +904 (+78%) compared to target (1160). Cleveland remained the highest in 2024/25.
- Grassland fires accounted for 23% of incidents. 36% of incidents occurred in Redcar and Cleveland, an increase of 135% (430) compared to the same period the previous year.
- Accidental Dwelling Fires – Q1 has seen 64 ADF incidents. Compared to the previous year this is an increase of +21 (+49%), +19 (+42) compared to the 5-year average and +23 (+56%) against target (41). CFB remained in the lowest quartile nationally during 2024/25. The highest rate of fires has occurred in the 'very high' range (0.67 fires per 1,000 dwellings). 69% of fires had very low severity during 2025/26. 27% of incidents occurred in household with the age range of 36-45.
- Safer Homes Visits – 4,336 visits completed in Q1 with 6,165 interventions. Compared to 2024/25 visits have reduced by -1394 (-24%). There has also been a reduction of -317 (-7%) compared to the 5-year average and -1481 (-25%) compared to the set target of 5,817. In 2023/24 Cleveland had the third highest rate of SHV nationally. Visits carried out by operational crews have reduced by 27%, due to the extra demand in emergency response. 13% of visits carried out resulted in referrals to other agencies or providing risk reduction equipment.
- Deliberate Fires – 2,036 incidents in Q1. +1120 (+122%) compared to 2024/25, +869 (+74%) compared to the 5-year average and +901 (+79%) against target. CFB remained the highest nationally during 2024/25, over six times higher than the average England rate. Both deliberate primary and secondary fires have

32.1 Organisational Performance & Efficiency Report – 2025/26 (Q1) cont.

increased 40% and 136% respectively. From April to June an average of 679 deliberate incidents have occurred on a monthly basis. In Q1 CFB is already 50% towards the Brigades set target of 4099.

- Industrial & Commercial Audits – 213 audits in Q1 including attempted. 62 completed (all medium risk) from the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) and a further 95 attempted. 56 reactive audits completed. -89% compared to the RBIP target of 1378. Nationally in 2023/24 Cleveland were the sixth highest. 92% of completed audits from the RBIP were deemed unsatisfactory in 2025/26.
- Emergency Response Standards: Building Fires – In Q1 pump 1 achieved an average response time of 00:06:09. This is +4% from 2024/25 and +14% against the 5-year average. Compared to target the response time has seen a reduction of -12%. On 164 occasions pump 1 exceeded the response standards. Pump 2 had an average response time of 00:08:06 in Q1. This is a reduction of -4% compared to the previous year, -10% compared to target and +19% compared to the 5-year average.
- All Staff Sickness – 1330 duty days lost to sickness in Q1. +0.06 (+3%) compared to 2024/25, +0.05 (+2%) compared to the 5-year average and -0.19 (-7%) against target. Main causes of sickness are 36% Musculo skeletal, 25% mental health and 12% cancer and tumours. Across the board 51% of sickness is classed at long term.
- Sickness: By Staff Group (Q1):
 - WT – 02.30 duty shifts/person (753 duty days) lost. 61% being short term sickness. Compared to the previous year we have seen a reduction of -0.21 (-8%), -0.34 (-13%) compared to the 5-year average and -0.47 (-17%) against target.
 - On Call – 0.94 shifts lost. Compared to 2023/24 this is an increase of 0.09 (+10%), +0.16 (+20%) compared to target and a decrease of -0.16 (14%) compared to the 5-year average. 81% of sickness is long term.
 - Fire Control – 1.03 shifts lost. This is a reduction of -1.05 (-50%) compared to 2024/25, -3.16 (-75%) compared to the 5-year average and -1.92 (-65%) against target. 100% due to long term sickness.
 - Green Book – 4.38 shifts lost due to sickness, +1.14 (+35%) compared to the previous year, +2.00 (+84%) compared to the 5-year average and +0.91 (+26%) compared to target. 67% of sickness is long term.
- Health and Safety: Accidents Resulting in Injury – 14 injuries in Q1. This is an increase of +4 (+180%) compared to the previous year. Compared to the 5-year average we have seen an increase of +7 (+100%) and +7 (+100%) against target. CFB had the lowest rate for accidents in 2023/24 nationally. 3 RIDDOR incidents reported in Q1, +1 compared to 2024/25, +2 compared to the 5-year average and +3 compared to target.
- Health and Safety: Violence to Staff – 14 accidents reported in Q1. 71% of incidents involve objects being thrown at appliances/ firefighters as well as verbal abuse. 1 incident was reported by crews experiencing unrest whilst attending a fire in a cell at Holme House Prison. Against target we have seen an increase of +5 (+56%), +8 (133%) compared to 2024/24 and +5 (+56%) compared to the 5-year average.

32.1 Organisational Performance & Efficiency Report – 2025/26 (Q1) cont.

Members noted that the age group 36 to 45 years had been identified as being at a higher risk from Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs) and asked if similar risks applied to the over-65 aged group. The Area Manager - Assistant Director of Prevention, Protection & Planning confirmed that the 36-45 age group data indicated that these incidents were more common amongst families, where there may be more distractions within the household, particularly around meal times. He added that specific questions around this are being asked at Safer Home Visits (SHVs) to address the issue.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

32.2 Internal Audit Progress Report

The ACFO-DSPPR presented the audits undertaken to date and highlighted the outcomes relating to limited/satisfactory assurance. There were two outstanding actions from 2023/24 which will now be completed by July 2025. Six outstanding actions from the 2024/25 Stores audit remain in progress for completion by September 2025.

RESOLVED - that the progress made against the 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 Internal Audit Plans be noted.

32.3 Review of the Corporate Risk Register

Members considered the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) which had been reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team in August 2025. The outcome of this review was detailed at Appendix 1 and the ACFO-DSPPR referred Members to paragraph 4.4 which detailed the following added risk:-

- Loss of telecommunications between the Control Room and Incident Ground.

The ACFO-DSPPR also highlighted 2 risks which are changing:-

- Pension Remedies - reduced risk of financial burden and litigation from not implementing within the legal deadlines
- CFBRMS C.I.C - increased risk of financial and reputational impact from not aligning to Brigade values, which will change to focus on long-term reputational risk.

RESOLVED – that Members noted the Corporate Risk Register, at Appendix 1.

32.4 Progress Against Revenue and Capital Budgets 2025/26 (Q1)

The Treasurer presented the current position as of 30 June 2025 and informed Members that the forecasted outturn position was an overspend owing to the phasing of commitments on premises, supplies and services and transport costs as detailed at Appendix 1.

The Treasurer reported a forecast outturn position of £1.961m underspend against a Capital Budget of £7.077m for 2025/26 which consists of three elements, including an element of capital expenditure to be deferred to 2026/27. Members were referred to Appendix 2 for the progress for each project within the Capital Programme.

32.4 Progress Against Revenue and Capital Budgets 2025/26 (Q1) cont.

Members expressed concern at the reported cuts to Local Government Grant allocations for fire and rescue services for 2026/27 and the negative financial impact this could have on the Brigade. .

The Treasurer confirmed that the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) have issued a press release highlighting the issues and calling for the government to remove fire from the Fair Funding Review.

RESOLVED - that the position as of 30 June 2025 be noted.

32.5 COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (CRMP) 2026-30

The ACFO-DSPRR updated members on the current position of the CRMP and outlined that the new format of the Plan has changed from previous years and is now divided into five key pillars; Prevention, Protection, Response, People and Resources, underpinned by Strategic Planning. The Brigade's mission and vision will also be reviewed with input from both Brigade staff and Members to agree a single statement.

RESOLVED- That the verbal update be noted.

**COUNCILLOR JIM BEALL
CHAIR**