

---

# CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

## MINUTES OF AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING



**25 AUGUST 2017**

---

**PRESENT:**

**CHAIR:-**  
Councillor Norah Cooney – Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council  
**HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
Councillor Marjorie James  
**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL**  
Councillor Naweed Hussain  
**STOCKTON ON TEES**  
Councillors Gillian Corr, Paul Kirton, Mick Stoker  
**INDEPENDENT PERSONS**  
Mr Mike Hill, Mr Steve Harwood  
**AUTHORISED OFFICERS**  
Chief Fire Officer, Director of Corporate Services, Treasurer, Legal  
Adviser & Monitoring Officer  
**MAZARS**  
Cameron Waddell (Engagement Lead), Ross Woodley (Audit Manager),  
Jack McHugh (Intern)  
**IN ATTENDANCE**  
Risk & Performance Officer

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors Neil Bendelow – Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council  
Councillor Teresa Higgins – Middlesbrough Council  
Councillor Ray Martin-Wells – Hartlepool Borough Council

**33. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE ENSUNG YEAR**

The Director of Corporate Services (DoCS) sought nominations for the position of Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee for 2017/18. Councillor Cooney was subsequently proposed and seconded whereupon nominations were closed.

**RESOLVED – that Councillor Cooney be appointed Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee for the ensuing year (2017/18).**

**Councillor Cooney in the Chair**

**34. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS**

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

**35. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR FOR ENSUING YEAR**

The Chair sought nominations for the position of Vice Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee for 2017/18. It was agreed by members that nominations be deferred to the next Audit & Governance Committee Meeting on 10 November 2017.

OFFICIAL

**36. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee held on 19 May 2017 be confirmed.**

**37. REPORT OF THE CLERK**

**37.1 Audit & Governance Forward Work Programme 2017/18**

The Director of Corporate Services (DoCS) outlined the Forward Work Programme for 2017/18, as detailed at Appendix 1, in accordance with the requirements of the Authority's Standing Orders. The DoCS noted that the Forward Work Programme will remain flexible to allow consideration of additional items should they arise.

**RESOLVED – that the Forward Work Programme 2017/18, as outlined at Appendix 1, be approved.**

**38. REPORTS OF MAZARS**

**38.1 Audit Completion Report 31 March 2017**

The Engagement Lead (EL) Cameron Waddell presented the Audit Completion Report which detailed the findings of their audit for the year ended 31 March 2017.

The Audit Manager (AM) Ross Woodley stated that fundamentally the audit is now complete and that next year it will be completed by July 2018.

The AM thanked the officers of the Authority and Hartlepool Council for their assistance in enabling processes to be reviewed to ensure the earlier audit deadlines can be achieved in future years.

Mike Hill asked that given the audit will be completed by July 2018 will this have an impact on the Audit & Governance schedule of meetings. The AM replied that next year there will be an Authority meeting at the end of July to approve the Audit Report.

**RECOMMENDED - that the report be noted.**

**38.2 Audit Progress Report – July 2017**

The AM presented the Audit Progress Report which covered:

- The progress of the 2016/17 Audit
- National Publications and Other Updates
- Contact details

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) informed Members that with reference to the HMIC Inspectorate the Lead Inspector for Police and Fire is Mike Cunningham. There is no intention for any inspections to take place prior to February 2018 and the order of inspections is to follow. The CFO stated that we will be utilising the evidence from our Auditors to support this inspection.

**RECOMMENDED - that the report be noted.**

### 39. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

#### 39.1 Organisational Performance & Efficiency Report April 2017 – July 2017

The CFO outlined the performance of the Brigade for the period 1 April 2017 to July 2017 which is summarised below:

- Total incidents attended 3,580 – 173 incidents more than the same period last year (5% increase).
- The largest increase was in secondary fires which have seen an increase of 485 compared to 2016. This has been partially counter balanced through a reduction in numbers of EMR incidents (-437)
- Fire fatalities – 100% increase (this relates to 1 incident)
- Fire injuries – 150% increase (this relates to 3 incidents)
- Accidental Dwelling Fires – 45% increase (relates to 19 more incidents than the previous year) which has cost the economy of Cleveland £1,525.00 so far this year. There is some National work ongoing with Manufacturers of white goods which have been a major factor of house fires.
- We have conducted 2199 Safe and Well visits (since October 2016). 183 Referrals to falls teams have been made.
- Call Handling - target 98% of calls dealt with an appropriate response mobilised within 2 minutes – current performance 91%
- Response Standards – our target is 75% for all benchmarks. In 2017/18 the Brigade significantly exceeded these benchmarks in all cases the lowest one being 85%.
- Sickness Absence
  - Current performance 1.55 duty shifts per employee 23% lower than 2016/17
  - All staff sickness equates to 23% over target and has so far cost the Brigade £156,509. Main causes of sickness are Anxiety/Depression, Gastro-Intestinal and Upper Limb

Councillor James asked are we investigating the source of white goods and do we keep records of the make and models of the faulty appliances. The CFO replied that we have had a number of recalls on tumble dryers. Some of the issues are of people not allowing the cycle to finish and therefore there is a build-up of fluff and material. Others have been recalled due to a manufacturers fault. There is work ongoing nationally regarding white goods especially after the recent incident at Grenfell Towers.

The Risk and Performance Officer stated that we do keep records of the make of the appliances and also the model number if it is achievable.

Councillor James asked if there was an impetus to raise the issues of sprinklers in buildings with the Government. The CFO replied that we continue to work with the National Sprinkler Association in pressing the issue with Central Government in relation to residential properties. There is no doubt Grenfell will have had an impact on these decisions but there is no immediate indication that the Government are going to bring this requirement in through new legislation.

**39.1 Organisational Performance & Efficiency Report April 2017 – July 2017 cont**

Mike Hill stated that we have seen a reduction in the amount of EMR calls we attend, is this due to the fact that NEAS are at full strength and are now attending all incidents? The CFO replied that EMR is a significant part of the firefighting pay claim. Our work with NEAS has reduced, however we have stated to NEAS that we will still deliver this service on a commissioning basis.

Councillor James stated that the Brigades' response time for attending EMR incidents is 8 minutes and 19 seconds, the average response time from NEAS to an incident is a further 11 minutes 33 seconds. The CFO said that if we look at the last financial year we attended 3,000 EMR incidents and NEAS attended 496,000. We have to take into account the number of calls and the response times.

**39.2 Sickness Analysis Report 2016/17**

The DoCS presented the Sickness Analysis Report and reported that each year we carry out this analysis which is also reflected in the Brigade's Health and Wellbeing Strategy covering the period 2016/17 - 2018/19 and takes cognisance of the need to achieve the strategic outcomes and associated targets by 31 March 2019.

Councillor Kirton asked if the levels of sickness were more evident in one particular age group. The DoCS replied that we do have an ageing workforce, however our records show sickness across all age groups.

Mike Hill stated that the report reflects long term sickness is on average with other Fire and Rescue Services. Short term sickness is the issue. The DoCS stated that we are looking in-depth at this and also into causes of mental health within the organisation.

Councillor James asked do we look at Retained personnel in the same way and the reasons why they are unavailable. The CFO replied that with Retained personnel they have either a 100% or 75% contract. Most of the time they only state the times they are available.

Councillor James asked could we have part-time Firefighters rather than Retained, which may enable someone who is approaching retirement to go part time. The CFO informed members that due to the structure within the Retained Duty System, the only option at present is 100% or 75% contracts.

Councillor Corr asked was there a generational theme within the sickness figures. The CFO replied that our workforce is of the older generation as we have not recruited for Wholetime since 2009.

Councillor James asked do we capture sickness on the apprentices. The DoCS replied that these figures are included in the reports.

Mike Hill thanked the DoCS for presenting this information and although they were not healthy figures they needed to be highlighted in order to analyse further.

**RECOMMENDED – that the report be noted.**

**39.3 Cleveland Fire Brigade Workforce Profile 2015/16**

The DoCS presented the report which is an analysis for Cleveland Fire Brigade's Workforce Profile 2015/16 that will be used to inform the improvements associated with the Authority's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2017/22 that is currently under development.

Councillor James stated if we were able to provide part time Firefighter roles, females maybe more interested in becoming Firefighters and these diverse male/female figures would change dramatically.

**RECOMMENDED –**

- (i) that Members note the analysis of the Brigade's Workforce Profile 2015/16 as attached at Appendix A that will be used to inform the improvements associated with the Authority's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2017-2022 that is currently being developed.**
- (ii) that Members note that on Completion, the Authority's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2017-2022 will be presented to the Fire Authority's Executive Committee for approval**

**39.4 Internal Audit Progress Report to 30 July 2017**

The DoCS summarised the progress on the recommendations contained within the Action Plans from Internal Audits carried out to date and listed the areas subject to Audit Review during the period 1 April – 30 July 2017.

**RECOMMENDED – that the progress made to date contained within the Internal Auditor's Actions Plans be noted.**

**39.5 Progress Against Revenue and Capital Budgets 2017/18**

The HoF presented the current position as at 30 June 2017 and informed Members of the forecasted outturn position which shows a net underspend of £0.350m. He confirmed that the final outturn will be dependent on the implementation of the CIRMP proposals.

**RECOMMENDED - that the position at 30 June 2017 be noted**

**40. JOINT REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

**40.1 Outturn and Financial Report (including the 2016/17 Statement of Accounts)**

Members scrutinised the 2016/17 Financial Report, which (included the Statement of Accounts). The Treasurer reported that apart from the new format there was nothing new within the reports.

Councillor James stated that it has been a long time since we held an IRP. The Treasurer confirmed this was the case and review could take account of the current governance arrangements and reduced size of the Authority. Members agreed that a report on this issue should be submitted to the Authority.

**40.1 Outturn and Financial Report (Including the 2016/17 Statement of Accounts)**  
**Cont.....**

**RECOMMENDED:-**

- (i) that the report be noted.**
- (ii) that Members noted that the Financial Report (including Statement of Accounts) detailed in Appendix 3 would be subject to an independent audit by Mazars and details of any material amendments would be reported to the Executive Committee on 22 September 2017.**
- (iii) That Members noted the opportunity to raise questions and/or seek clarification of information included in the Financial Report in the period up to 22 September 2017, when the audited Financial Report will be presented to the Executive Committee for final approval.**

**41. TO RECEIVE THE REPORTS OF THE TREASURER**

**41.1 Local Audit and Accountability Act Update**

The Treasurer updated and informed Members on progress in relation to the application of the Local Audit and Accountability Act, 2014.

**RECOMMENDED – that Members note the contents of the report and that further update reports will be submitted on the implementation or arrangements to comply with the Local Audit and Accountability Act.**

**41.2 Consultation on External Auditor Appointment from 2018/19**

The Treasurer updated and informed Members of the formal communication received by the CFO and Treasurer of Cleveland Fire Authority from Public Sector Auditor Appointments (PSAA) to consult on the external auditor appointment from 2018/19. PSSA propose the appointment of Mazars LLP to audit the accounts of Cleveland Fire Authority for five years from 2018/19.

**RECOMMENDED - that Members note the appointment of Mazars LLP to audit the accounts of Cleveland Fire Brigade for five years from 2018/19 and that the Treasurer confirm this to PSAA by email before their deadline of Friday 22 September.**

**41.3 Understanding Management Processes and Arrangements 2016/17**

The Treasurer informed Members and sought approval for the draft response letter outlined at Appendix 1 be agreed to be sent to the Director and Engagement Lead of the Authority's External Auditor, Mazars, regarding processes, arrangements and compliance with laws and regulations and fraud.

**RESOLVED – that Members agree the letter at Appendix 1 outlining how the activities of the Committee comply with the International Standards for Auditing and authorise the Chair to respond accordingly to the external Auditor.**

**42. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mike Hill asked from the lessons learned from the Grenfell Tower incidents are there any implications for us as a Brigade? The CFO stated that a full report has been taken to the Executive Committee and the Cleveland Fire Authority meeting on the effects post Grenfell with regards to what we have done, actions we have taken since the incident and what actions we will be taking moving forward. He reported that following this incident there may be changes to Building Regulations and legislations.

Councillor James added that due to the financial implications regarding installing sprinkler systems in high rise buildings, very few were installed. The CFO advised that our Fire Engineering department are involved in the planning process of new buildings and that in 2004 under new legislation, every high rise building had to have sprinklers installed. Unfortunately the legislation did not include fitting sprinklers to existing high rise buildings.

**COUNCILLOR NORAH COONEY  
CHAIR**