
CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING



9 NOVEMBER 2018

PRESENT:

CHAIR:-

Councillor Norah Cooney – Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Marjorie James, Mike Young

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Teresa Higgins, Naweed Hussain

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Neil Bendelow

INDEPENDENT PERSONS

Mr Mike Hill, Mr Steve Harwood

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Director of Corporate Services, Treasurer, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer

MAZARS

Gavin Barker, Audit Director

IN ATTENDANCE

Area Manager – Prevention

Head of Risk and Performance, Head of Finance

APOLOGIES

Chief Fire Officer

FOR ABSENCE:

Ross Woodley, Audit Manager, Mazars

Councillors Gillian Corr, Paul Kirton, Mick Stoker - Stockton on Tees BC

60. INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed Councillor Mike Young to the meeting. Councillor Young was appointed to the Authority on 14 September 2018 by Hartlepool Borough Council.

61. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

62. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee held on 24 August 2018 be confirmed.

63. REPORTS OF MAZARS

63.1 Audit Progress Report – November 2018

The Audit Director Gavin Barker introduced himself to the meeting and informed Members that he was replacing Cameron Waddell and had previously worked with the Authority six years ago in an audit capacity.

63.1 Audit Progress Report – November 2018

He reported that the Audit Progress Report was still in the planning phases and he would be presenting the Audit Strategy Memorandum to the next Audit & Governance Committee.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

64. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**64.1 Annual Statement of Assurance 2017/18**

Members scrutinised the Annual Statement of Assurance 2017/18 outlined at Appendix 1 of the report which contained details relating to financial, governance and operational matters. The Director of Corporate Services reported that this document was a statutory requirement produced in line with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012.

RECOMMENDED – That the Executive Committee consider and approve the Annual Statement of Assurance 2017/18 (Appendix 1) at its meeting on 23 November 2018.

64.2 Organisational Performance & Efficiency Report April 2018 – July 2018

The Head of Risk and Performance (HoRP) outlined the performance of the Brigade for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 October 2018 and gave an overview of the Bonfire Period. The report covered the following details:

- Total incidents stand at 5409 a reduction of 337 (- 6%) compared to the same period last year.
- Secondary fires (2262 incidents) account for 42% of all incidents and have increased by 10% (204 incidents) since last year. False Alarms (1895) account for 35% of incidents.
- EMR incidents have reduced from 403 to 18 incidents with only 2 retained stations now participate in EMR.
- Accidental Dwelling Fires have reduced by 24% (-21) since 2017/18 with increases in Hartlepool and Stockton and decreases in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. The main causes are electrical (25%), careless handling (23%), cooking related (19%) and radiated heat (19%).
- 70% of Accidental Dwelling Fires had a previous HFSV before the incident.
- Nationally there has been 27,525 ADF's of which 142 occurred in our Brigade areas, 0.5% of the national total. Our main preventative services for ADF's are Home Fire Safety Visits and Safe and Well Visits. Nationally 616,875 Home Fire Safety Visits have been conducted of which 20,259 are in this Brigade area 3% of the National total.
- Deliberate Fire fatalities – 0 incidents
- Deliberate Fire injuries – 0 incidents
- Bonfire Period (26 October – 7 November) - Deliberate secondary fires have increased by 25% (41 Incidents) compared to the same period in 2017. Deliberate primary fires have reduced by 48% (10 incidents). Violence to staff incidents remained unchanged at 6 incidents for the Bonfire Period.

64.2 Organisational Performance & Efficiency Report April 2018 – July 2018 cont

- Response Standards:

▪ Call Answering:	Target set at 7 seconds, Actual 7.7 seconds
▪ Call Handing:	Target 100 seconds - Actual 86 Seconds
▪ Building Fires 1st Appliance	Target 7 Minutes, Actual 4.50 Minutes
▪ Building Fires 2nd Appliance	Target 10 Minutes, Actual 6.47 Minutes
▪ RTC	Target 8 Minutes, Actual 5.18 Minutes

- Sickness Absence for 2018/19 saw a significant reduction in Quarter 2 for Green Book (30%) and Fire Control (24%) compared to Quarter 2 in 2017/18. Wholtime and Retained have experienced increases of 40% and 44% respectively. Main causes being lower limb (412 shifts lost), Mental Health (382 shifts lost) and Gastro-Intestinal (349 shifts lost).
- Violence to Staff Incidents – 17 incidents (+42%) from 2017/18.

The DCS praised Brigade staff for their efforts in continuing to maintain Cleveland's position as the safest place to live in the country in respect of Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs).

Councillor Young commended the aftercare and preventative work the Brigade delivers following a house fire. The Area Manager (AM) reported that this was part of the Brigade's Safer Homes Strategy and is why residents across Cleveland are 49% less likely to have an ADF than in any other part of the country.

Councillor Higgins asked if the body worn camera pilot had successfully reduced incidents. The AM reported that over the bonfire period there had been positive feedback and there had been no incidents of violence to staff in the areas where body worn cameras had been trialled.

Councillor Bendelow asked if there were areas where violence to staff was more prevalent. The AM confirmed there were hot spot areas and the Brigade worked in partnership with each local authority area and sits on targeted bonfire sub groups.

Councillor James pointed out that although statistically there had been no more incidents of violence towards staff it was likely there would have been if body worn cameras had not been used a deterrent.

Councillor James also asked for a more pro-active approach to prevent private bonfires occurring and for local authorities to use their statutory powers to control all private bonfires to ensure they are registered, controlled and regulated. She added that planning should take place early with a high public profile. The AM suggested that the Safer Partnership groups would be happy to take that view on and agreed to take this to the next round of meetings.

Councillor Higgins highlighted an issue in her ward with lorries dropping off wood and cardboard from lunch time on 5 November which she acknowledged left very little time for the local authority to remove the bonfires. She also reported incidents of violence towards police and firefighters and displays of anti-social behaviour.

64.2 Organisational Performance & Efficiency Report April 2018 – July 2018 cont.

The AM confirmed that planning took place during the summer months in preparation for the bonfire period including a 'Bring out your Dross' campaign which allowed residents to have household items collected free of charge by their councils. He confirmed there were hotspot areas where schools were targeted and also campaigns aimed at those not in education. Following the bonfire period all partners take part in a 'hot debrief' to consider how effective the strategy was.

Councillor James suggested including social landlords in the 'bonfire strategy' to make them aware if tenants are involved in activities that increase the fire risk to the property and those around them. She suggested they may be able to act on this if it is a breach of their tenancy agreement.

Mr Hill suggested a report be taken to the Fire Authority recommending local authorities change their rules regarding bonfires. Councillor James suggested this also include reference to social landlords.

Councillor James asked for details on the CCTV fitted to appliances and whether any prosecutions had been made using evidence collected on them. The AM confirmed that all appliances were fitted with CCTV systems and have captured numerous incidents in the past which are passed on to police. He confirmed that body worn cameras were an extension of that.

Councillor James said she was disappointed at the lack of media coverage of prosecutions as publicity of fines and prison sentences could be used as a deterrent and also demonstrate the huge cost to the public purse.

Mr Hill praised the positive outcomes in the report and queried why there may be instances when an appliance fails to respond. The AM reported that the main reason for an appliance failing to attend would be if a retained appliance was under crewed, in which case direct action would be taken by control to mobilise another appliance.

Mr Hill asked whether the retained system was an effective system. The AM reported that the current retained model exists across the country and Cleveland is currently looking at ways of making this more effective. Mr Harwood acknowledged that changes to work patterns over time has made retained recruitment difficult. The AM confirmed that growing pressures to business is also a contributing factor making it more difficult for people to respond.

Councillor Bendelow asked for clarity on why sickness figures were higher than in 2017/18 following the implementation of measures to address this. The DoCS confirmed that sickness figures last year were the lowest Cleveland had achieved over the past 10 years and the launch of the Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy had been a contributing factor. She confirmed that although there was a small increase she hoped this would level off by the end of the year.

RECOMMENDED:-

- (i) that the report be noted.**
- (ii) that a report be considered by the Fire Authority asking local authorities to change their rules on private bonfires.**

64.3 Corporate Risk Register

Members considered the Corporate Risk Register which had been reviewed in October 2018 by the Active Risk Team as part of the Brigade's strategic planning process. The outcome of this review was detailed at Appendix 1 with the new risks identified as:

- Pension Fund Shortfall
- Brexit
- Cyber Security

The Treasurer confirmed that while the Pension Fund Shortfall was new to the Corporate Risk Register it had been identified as a risk in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) two years ago. He reported that the Authority had made provisions in its budget of £100k for 2019/20 and the issue was how this shortfall would be funded beyond 2019/20.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

64.4 Internal Audit Progress Report

The DCS presented the audits undertaken to date and highlighted the outcomes relating to limited / satisfactory assurance. She also gave a position statement regarding the actions set out in the audit action plans.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the 2017/18 Internal Audit position and outstanding action plans be noted.**
- (ii) that the progress made to date in the Internal Audit Plan 2018/19 be noted.**

64.5 Progress Against Revenue and Capital Budgets 2018/19

The Head of Finance (HoF) presented the current position as at 30 September 2018 and informed Members of the forecasted outturn position which shows a net underspend of £0.924m. He confirmed that 77% of planned 2018/19 savings had already been achieved and the under-spend forecast reflects the Brigade's workforce planning arrangements in order to manage vacancy levels to support the CIRMP plans for 2019/20.

Mr Hill asked for clarification regarding the acquisition of Breathing Apparatus Telemetry. The HoF confirmed that this slippage was due to a review of the framework agreement at a national level and would not impact firefighter safety.

Councillor James queried the variance in relation to Supplies and Services. The HoF reported that this was owing to the supplier increasing charges in the year end without notice contributing to a small increase in this area. The Treasure reiterated that the budget shows the Authority can cope with that increase and that the priority was firefighter safety.

RESOLVED:-

- i) that the position at 30 September 2018 be noted.**
- ii) that Members note that a proposed strategy for using the forecast managed under-spend will be developed as part of the 2019/20 budget process.**

65. REPORT OF THE LEGAL ADVISER AND MONITORING OFFICER**65.1 Disqualification Criteria for Councillors: Consultation Response**

The Legal Advisor and Monitoring Officer (LAMO) informed Members of the response from the Government following its consultation on Disqualification Criteria for Councillors and Mayors, previously considered by the committee on 10 November 2017

He reported that Cleveland was the only Fire and Rescue Authority to submit a response out of the 178 responses received and referred Members to Section 4 which provided a summary of responses.

The LAMO reported that changes to the 'disqualification criteria' would require parliamentary approval and the Government would look toward legislating for such changes when parliamentary time allows.

RESOLVED - that Members noted the Consultation Response and the Government's intention to carry forward changes to the disqualification criteria when parliamentary time allows.

**COUNCILLOR NORAH COONEY
CHAIR**