



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Minutes of the Meeting of the OVERVIEW AND AUDIT COMMITTEE of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2022 at 10.00 AM.

Present: Councillors Adoh, Bagge, Carroll, Darlington, Exon (part), Hussain (part), Stuchbury and Waite

Officers: J Thelwell (Chief Fire Officer), M Osborne (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), M Hussey (Principal Accountant), A Carter (Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO), K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer), S Gowanlock (Corporate Planning Manager), S Harlock (Internal Audit Manager, Buckinghamshire Council), B Ackerlay (Group Commander Head of Operational Training and Assurance), A Burch (Group Commander Technical), J Cook (Community Safety and Safeguarding Manager) R Smith (Procurement Manager) and C Newman (Data Intelligence Team Manager)

Remotely: A Stunell (Head of Human Resources), C Bell (Head of Protection, Assurance and Development), P Mould (Area Commander Industrial Action), S Connolly (Station Commander, Resilience and Business Continuity), A Brittain (External Audit Manager EY) and F Churchhouse (External Audit EY).

Apologies: Councillor Chapple OBE

The Chairman, welcomed Members to the Overview and Audit Committee Meeting of the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority and advised that although members of the public were allowed to attend and observe in limited numbers, the meeting was being recorded and a copy would be uploaded onto the Authority's YouTube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWmIXPWAscxpL3vliv7bh1Q>

OA18 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Audit Committee held on Wednesday 20 July 2022, be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

OA19 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

OA09 – It was agreed that the Chief Fire Officer should draft a cross party letter to the Government regarding funding a pay rise for firefighters. Subsequent to that, an offer was made to the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) for a 5% pay increase. The FBU had now gone out to a consultative ballot to see whether their members were minded to accept a 5% pay increase. The results of the ballot would be available in the next couple of weeks.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that following the last Overview and Audit Committee meeting, he had been interviewed on BBC news and explained the situation this Service was in, in terms of funding any pay rise. The Service needed precept flexibility and any pay rise to be funded through central Government. The Chief Fire Officer had also undertaken some informal lobbying through the National Fire Chiefs Counsel (NFCC) to push the NJC and LGA to move from a 2% to 5% pay increase. A letter had also been sent to the new Fire Minister calling on an increase in central Government funding for this Service or the ability to raise Council Tax by up to £5 per year.

A Member asked if there was any indication if the Government would be willing to increase funding to the Service or the ability to raise Council Tax by up to £5 per year. The Chief Fire Officer advised, there was no indication at all. There would be an announcement regarding the budget in November. The Authority would only find out if it had precept flexibility towards the end of December.

OA09 - The Director of Finance and Assets advised that at the last meeting there was a question regarding inflationary pressures, and non pay inflationary pressures i.e., utilities, fuel etc., and also the Director of Finance and Assets had advised Members there was an NFCC Inflation Survey being carried out. This survey was now in final draft, awaiting sign off from the NFCC. Once it was signed off, it would be circulated to all Members of the Committee. In terms of the non-pay inflationary pressures the Service was experiencing at the moment, the inflation rate was 11.2% for the year. If a pay award of 5% was included, it would bring the rate down to 7.2%.

Director
of
Finance
and
Assets

OA20 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

OA21 RIPA POLICY (MINUTE OA39 – 090316)

The Director of Legal and Governance advised Members that the Authority was the enforcing authority investigating potential breaches of fire safety legislation and confirmed that in the last

reporting period, no covert surveillance under the Regulation Investigatory Powers Act 2000 had been undertaken.

RESOLVED –

To note that there had been no covert surveillance conducted by officers since the last meeting of the Committee.

OA22 CLOSING – AUDIT RESULTS REPORT (VERBAL UPDATE)

The External Auditor advised Members that Ernst & Young (EY) were well progressed with the external audit and thanked the Finance team for their cooperation and responsiveness to queries that had been raised thus far. The issues that had been identified would be reported on when the final results report came to the Committee. These were around PPE (i.e. property, plant, and equipment) and the valuation process, and one disclosure impact in relation to the financial instruments. In terms of outstanding work, the final valuers' report on the property valuations was still outstanding, and there was also some outstanding queries in relation to the valuation calculations.

The External Auditor advised Members that EY relied on the work of the Auditor of the Buckinghamshire Pension fund for the LGPS element of the pension for the nett liability. In order to do that, Grant Thornton, as Auditor of the Council and the pension scheme, provide the Authority with an IS19 letter providing assurance and this had not yet been received. There was also a query outstanding with the Council in relation to the calculation of the Council Tax debtors in the collection fund. Once everything had been received, EY could complete their final review of value for money work, going concern conclusions, and then the overall review of documentation.

OA23 2021/22 COMPLIMENTS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

The Station Commander, Resilience and Business Continuity advised Members that the Compliments, Concerns and Complaints report was brought to the Overview and Audit Committee on an annual basis to assure its communities within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes that the Service treated expressions of dissatisfaction seriously and that any learning from the investigations undertaken, was fed back into the organisation. The report had been reviewed by the Lead Member for People, Equality and Diversity and Assurance prior to submission to the Committee.

The report reflected the previous three years' data and Members would note there had been a significant reduction in the numbers of concerns or complaints received over the period 2021/2022,

compared with the previous year 2020/2021. Of the 14 complaints received, only two were upheld, both of these could be seen within the report.

The Service continued to send out customer satisfaction forms to both domestic and non-domestic users, following an incident within their respective property type. Members would see that the satisfaction rates across the three-year comparison remained high. The responses to both areas were reported separately within the report, with a synopsis of some of the qualitative responses received. An independent social research practice, Opinion Research Services, collates the responses and provide an annual report of their findings to the Service. The report was presented to the Performance Management Board, to aid Officers in identifying Service improvements.

A Member advised the Police had recently commissioned a report looking at their officers and their past experience with domestic abuse, asked if the Authority reviewed its own officers.

The Chief Fire Officer advised this was raised at a previous Fire Authority meeting following the murder of Sarah Everard. This Service did better than other services in terms of vetting procedures and DBS checks. The Service had been lobbying to get this rolled out across the country. Following lobbying by this Service, a national board was set up at the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to ensure standards were the same across all fire and rescue services.

A Member asked if the Covid-19 Pandemic had changed the way in which the data was received as people were at home more.

The Station Commander, Resilience and Business Continuity advised Members that during Covid-19, there was no impact on any of the complaints or compliments received.

A Member asked around behavioural conduct of staff and why it was happening.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that every complaint was investigated, and if it related to behaviour, it would be addressed. All complaints were taken very seriously.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

OA24 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Internal Audit Manager advised Members that this report highlighted the activity that was carried out with regard to

monitoring the implementation of audit actions, that were agreed following the completion of each audit review. Since the report was written, further progress had been made. There were five additional actions that had been closed, relating to the Resource Management audit. Of the 96 audit actions that were being monitored since 2019, 67 actions had been implemented, 22 were passed the agreed due date and 5 were in progress within the agreed due date. These were monitored with the action owners and if there were concerns, these were escalated to the Director of Finance and Assets, but good progress continued to be made.

A Member asked for an explanation of the 'amount of contingency' on page 35.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that the recommendation was as a result of the audit of the Blue Light Hub project where the contingency of the project was very small. The recommendation was when the Authority undertakes future projects of that scale, a bigger contingency was built in to cover risks associated with construction projects. This would be addressed when the Property Strategy was updated in the New Year.

RESOLVED –

That the progress on implementation of recommendations be noted

OA25 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – UPDATE ON THE 2022/23 ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN

The Internal Audit Manager advised Members that the purpose of this report was to update Members on the progress of the annual Internal Audit Plan since the last meeting. Work had progressed according to the approved 2022/23 plan, and regular discussions had been held with the Director of Finance and Assets to monitor progress.

The fieldwork for the HR and Payroll Process Mapping review had been completed and the quality assurance review was being undertaken before the draft report was issued. The Pensions Administration audit fieldwork had been completed and the quality assurance review was being undertaken before the draft report was issued. Terms of reference for the Business Continuity and Risk Management audit were currently being drafted, and fieldwork would commence in November. The Inspection and Operational Improvement Plan Assurance review was scheduled for December. The Core Financial Controls audit would be undertaken in quarter

four. The final reports would be presented to Members at the next Overview and Audit Committee meeting.

The Internal Audit Manager advised Members they were working towards delivering the full audit plan by the end of March and currently were on track to deliver and meet the target. When the audit was completed, the Internal Audit Manager would undertake a quality assurance review of the work undertaken to ensure all aspects of the agreed scope had been reviewed and then issue a draft report.

A Member asked around the funding of pension schemes.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that the funding of pensions was outside the scope of Internal Audit. Internal Audit were looking at the administration of the scheme, making sure that people were getting the correct amount. In terms of the funding, the firefighters pension scheme had a review every three years undertaken by the government's actuary department.

RESOLVED –

That Members note the progress on the Annual Internal Audit Plan.

OA26 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2022-2026 AND REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS RELATING TO CONTRACTS

The Procurement Manager advised Members the existing strategy expired in 2020, and the new strategy was deferred whilst awaiting the outcome of Brexit and subsequent changes to UK legislation relating to Public Procurement, with further delays due to the pandemic. The Strategy aligned to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Procurement Strategy. There were three key themes: Leadership, Commercial Practice and Delivering Local Benefits. A review date was set for 2025 to align with the review of the Authority's Public Safety Plan and Corporate Plan. It may require an earlier review following publication of the Procurement Bill, now expected Summer 2023, providing a six month notice period to prepare for 'Go Live' at the end of 2023.

The Procurement Manager advised Members that one of the other elements being focused on was Social Value and Sustainability, delivering local benefits. Currently 58% of Contracts were with SME's. The Strategy had been brought in with the review of Contract Standing Orders to ensure it was maintained.

The Procurement Manager advised Members that the Standing Orders relating to Contracts needed to be reviewed as regulations had changed and it was now UK procurement rules. The current

minimum threshold for tender was £10k. Feedback from core suppliers and SME suppliers was that this was onerous, it cost them money and it was felt the Authority was starting to lose some of its suppliers due to the complexity of processing. Along with changes to transparency rules and needing to publish any spend or contracts £25k and above, it seemed sensible to increase the minimum threshold of £10k up to £25k. This would also ensure the Authority was compliant with the data transparency rules coming in and align with its collaborative partners within the Thames Valley.

A Member was appreciative that social value and the impact on the local economy was being considered but was concerned as there was not a lot of detail in the report.

The Procurement Manager advised that the social value element would become a core part of every tender process. It was evaluated as a part of the current process. A contract management framework had been introduced which identified all future contract management must include monitoring items such as social values. It was very much proportionate to the tender and what goods and services were being brought. As a standard, it was currently 5% social value. Most of the Authority's procurement was very low value. However, the Authority used National frameworks.

A Member asked if there were more benefits using the new UK regulations.

The Procurement Manager advised that as the EU directives were adopted into UK law, the Authority continued to follow those thresholds. The UK government provided new thresholds, and these were reviewed every two years so there were no major changes yet. The Procurement Bill was going through the House of Lords and would be law during 2023 and that would change some of the processes. The key change expected would be more around transparency, and more transparency with suppliers.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that as suggested, he would bring an update back to a future meeting on the benefits achieved in terms of social value, sustainability between procurement.

A Member asked in the action plan 2021/2022 it mentioned the critical supplier annual review and formal health check, what does this consist of.

The Procurement Manager advised that the health check was not just financial, it covered quite a few other areas, including data protection, ED&I, insurance etc., that the Authority expected all its suppliers to be able to meet before they could be approved as a

Director
of
Finance
and
Assets

supplier. There was now real time live monitoring of all critical suppliers. The NFCC also monitor key suppliers and provide updates.

A Member welcomed the good relationship with local suppliers and also with the changes that had been identified, and asked if the people the Authority collaborated with were doing the same.

The Procurement Manager advised that for collaboration, it was mostly the three Thames Valley fire and rescue services. The procurement arm of the Thames Valley Collaborative Board met monthly. It produced a contracts register and joint pipelines that go out to the supply chain so they were aware of what contracts were coming up in the next few years. All documents were shared to try and align them as much as possible and best practice was shared. The EU rules to UK rules had been communicated by government to suppliers.

RESOLVED –

That the Authority be recommended to approve:

1. The Procurement Strategy 2022-2026 (Appendix 1)
2. The Standing Orders Relating to Contracts as amended (Appendix 2)

OA27 CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT

The Corporate Planning Manager advised Members that this report was the regular update on the status of Corporate Risks that were presented to every meeting of this Committee. The report reflected any changes and updates made to the Corporate Risk Register since the meeting held on 20 July. Since then, the risk register had been subject to regular review by officers and also by Lead Members where individual risks fell within their areas of reference.

The Corporate Planning Manager advised Members that there had been some significant changes, firstly, in relation to the staff availability risk. As the Chief Fire Officer had already mentioned, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) were currently consulting their members regarding the employers' revised 5% pay offer. The FBU's Executive Council had recommended that their members reject the offer. However, this only related to the pay offer itself, with rejection not automatically leading to strike action, for which a subsequent ballot would be required. Notwithstanding the outcome of the current consultation, officers continued to plan and prepare for any potential industrial action. The current consultative stage closed on Monday 14 November. Given the timescales required for a subsequent ballot and then, subject to the outcome, the notice period to be served on employers, it would be February before any

industrial action could take place, were FBU members to vote to do so.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that preparing and planning for strike action was a huge undertaking. The focus of the Service at the moment was planning for industrial action and monitoring it on a daily basis. The Service was also integral to the Local Resilience Forums, who were looking at Winter pressures.

The Corporate Risk Manager advised Members that regarding the financial risk, the risk score had been raised, which also elevated the RAG status from amber back up to red. As set out in the report, this was due to the significant inflationary pressures in relation to fuel and energy costs and also the likelihood of a higher than budgeted for outcome to the annual staff pay settlement. When the budget for this year was set back in February, the provision was for a 2% settlement. The incremental cost of every additional 1% was a little over £200k per annum. Alongside this, there was also continuing uncertainty over the future of some of the central government grant funding.

Regarding the information security risk, in addition to ongoing monitoring of the threat environment, officers were also keeping track of proposed changes to legislation in the form of the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill which sets out reforms to the UK's post Brexit data protection regime. This was currently processing through Parliament, although there had been a delay to the second reading and a new date was awaited.

There was some positive financial news in relation to the McCloud Sargeant pensions risk. Central government had agreed to meet the cost of any awards for 'injury to feelings' claims, which enabled the release of a £250k provision made to cover this contingency.

Regarding Covid, the latest statistical release from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) published on 4 November, indicated that the percentage of people testing positive had decreased in England. Obviously, the position was actively monitored and any associated staff absence trends. Also under scrutiny was flu, both the human and bird varieties. In relation to the former, as in previous years, staff had been offered a free vaccination and the roll-out had now been completed.

The Corporate Planning Manager advised that as Members would have seen, a climate change related risk had been escalated from the Prevention, Response and Resilience Directorate Risk Register to the Corporate Register. Essentially, it focused on the potential for

failure to protect communities from risks associated with climate change and the steps being taken to mitigate this.

A Member asked if firefighters do go on strike, what happens after the strike when they go back to work.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that if strike action does go ahead (and there was no strike ballot as yet), people would eventually come back to work. Officers had taken into consideration what would be the longer term damage to be mitigated in the event of strike action. After consultation with the local FBU, one of the provisions that had been laid down with regard to strike action, was to safeguard the longer term relationship between staff and their employers. There were regular meetings with the FBU, but the decision on pay was not negotiated locally but nationally.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that in terms of the level of service provision, the Authority must plan for strike action. Normally there would be an agreement that should a major incident occur, there was a provision to call back people who were on strike. That agreement was a national agreement and was not currently in place. In terms of the local provision, the Service would be looking for people to work during strike action. Everything the Service does, was considered in relation to the four principles that had been agreed and that these could be circulated to Members.

Chief Fire Officer

RESOLVED –

1. That the status on identified corporate risks at Annex C be reviewed and approved.
2. That comments be provided to officers for consideration and attention in future updates / reports.

OA28 OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (OAIP)

The Group Commander Head of Operational Training and Assurance advised Members that the purpose of the report was to provide an update on the progress that continued to be made in the delivery of the Service's Operational Assurance Improvement Plan (OAIP). The OAIP contained a comprehensive record of the recommendations and resulting actions that were intended to improve operational effectiveness. The OAIP was essentially a 'live document' which was updated from many areas of the Service, i.e., gap analysis, exercises, incidents, and national events. All recommendations and actions were governed by the Operational Assurance Group (OAG) prior to being accepted onto the OAIP.

A Members asked how widely involved staff were in the plan.

The Group Commander Head of Operational Training and Assurance advised Members that after every incident and exercise the Service attended, staff were sent a feedback form and the first question asked was how they think the service could be improved. Any feedback would be discussed at an OAG meeting.

A Members asked how the water resource was managed as, due to the very hot Summer, rivers were very low.

The Group Commander Head of Operation Training and Assurance advised Members, there were various ways the Service got water to incidents.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the current guidance for provision of water was written in 1946 and was currently being reviewed in consultation with the National Fire Chiefs Council. There would be changes to legislation around the provision of water for firefighting purposes. Other technologies for the provision of water, using less water in a different way were also being looked into.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development offered to meet with Members separately to expand upon this matter further.

RESOLVED –

That the progress made against each improvement detailed within the new updated OAIP is noted.

OA29 GRENFELL INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE (SEPTEMBER 2022)

The Group Commander Technical advised Members that the Grenfell Tower Inquiry report outlined the progress that had and was currently being made in response to the tragedy which took place on 14 June 2017. This six-monthly update was the fourth iteration since the work began to address the recommendations captured in the Phase 1 report. The report reflected the transparent approach undertaken by each part of the Service to action the improvements that needed to be made following the publication. The report provided an overview of activity across response, prevention, protection and operational assurance and training. Following the conclusion of Phase 1 of the Inquiry, there were 46 recommendations made that the Service had incorporated into an improvement plan. This plan was coordinated through the Technical Team and sponsored by the Head of Protection and Assurance.

The Group Commander Technical advised Members that of the 46 recommendations, to date, the Service had been able to complete 18 and had made some significant progress with 28. The introduction of legislation and the completion of assurance exercises through the

Head of Protection Assurance and Development

Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS), would complete the majority of the outstanding recommendations. Of the 28 in progress, 18 were reliant on the publication of National Guidance or the introduction of legislation. The primary responsibility for five was with TVFCS, embedding Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) policy and assuring call handling processes and training for Control room staff. The Service had primary responsibility to deliver the remaining five, three related directly to the introduction of new technology and communications software to enhance incident command support and the management of risk critical information and two required assurance through a confirmation of knowledge process of firefighters, knowledge of building construction and external wall cladding fires confirmation of risks.

The Inquiry had now concluded hearings for the eight Phase 2 modules and the Inquiry Panel were in the process of preparing the final report. It was anticipated that there would be additional recommendations for fire and rescue services to review and action once the Phase 2 report was published.

A Member asked for more information on the Central Funding (Section 8).

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that this was the first tranche of funding to meet the initial recommendations coming out of the report. There was further work ongoing around the building safety regulator, how the work to address all high risk premises could be funded. It would initially be through further government grant, and eventually it would be through recharges. Developers were picking up inspections, and that would be phased in over the next two to three years. If there was initial funding, there would be a longer term solution put in place, to ensure all buildings were safe.

A Member asked although it was well out of the Authority's control, implementation of the fire safety upgrades was not actually occurring in many of the tower blocks, because of the confusion about who was to pay. Was this putting additional pressure on the Service in terms of regular inspections, ensuring there were additional resources in case there was an incident in some of those tower blocks.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised Members that a separate, more details report around the specific elements of the fire safety order and the protection elements around the outcomes from the Grenfell Tower inquiry would be coming to the Fire Authority meeting on 7 December and would cover these questions raised.

RESOLVED –

That the report is noted.

OA30 HER MAJESTY’S INSPECTOR OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) – BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (BFRS) IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE: SEPTEMBER 2022

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised Members that this report was to present an update on the HMICFRS Improvement Plan. The Service continued to make progress against the Action Plan, one new item had started and was on track. The key focus remained around the two Causes for Concern, which relate to Prevention and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. There were a couple of items to highlight that had taken place since the last report. At the Fire Authority meeting on 12 October, the Prevention Strategy was approved and had now been shared across the Service. The Safety Centre funding agreement was also approved, and this would allow the Service to continue to deliver safety messages to more children within the community. The People Strategy year end update showed the progress made regarding ED&I. The Prevention Improvement Plan presented today, feeds into the HMICFRS action plan and showed the further progress that was being made.

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised Members that following a letter from His Majesty’s Inspector Matt Parr, the revisit had been confirmed for the week commencing 2 January, and would focus on Prevention and ED&I. The revisit would be over two days, and was made up of a desk top review, interviews and station visits and assessment of how the Service was progressing against those Causes of Concern. Members should note that if the Service was successful, the HMICFRS would only close the Clause of Concern for Prevention. It would not close a People Cause of Concern on a revisit, but assess the progress being taken. The Service continued to build its portfolio of evidence of support for the revisit.

RESOLVED –

That the Committee note the updated HMICFRS - BFRS improvement plan: September 2022

OA31 PREVENTION IMPROVEMENT PLAN – UPDATE TWO

The Community Safety and Safeguarding Manager advised Members that this report presented the second update on the Prevention Improvement Plan which was approved by this Committee in November 2021. The Prevention Improvement Plan contained 60 recommendations drawn from the Prevention Evaluation and the

HMICFRS findings. 12 areas were required to meet the Prevention Fire Standard and associated National Operational Guidance for the Person-Centred Approach (PCA). For awareness the plan had 60 recommendations grouped across Strategy, Vision and Leadership – 7, Intelligence -15, management of processes, systems and planning – 15, coordination and communication of operations – 13 and delivery of operations – 10. The highlight report for the July and August period showed 7 recommendations had been completed, 33 were on track and 18 were delayed from the time scale originally set.

The Community Safety and Safeguarding Manager advised Members that the key achievements to date included recruitment being reduced with long standing vacancies within the team down from 54% to 8%. The final post would be filled from the end of this month. Onboarding training was underway and was beginning to be seen in delivery numbers, but the full impact of recruitment would not be seen for six months. A move of three of the five areas of the Prevention Improvement Plan to an overall RAG rating of green.

A Member asked if there was a campaign around space heaters ahead of this Winter, and if so, could it be shared with Members.

The Community Safety and Safeguarding Manager advised she would share this with Members.

RESOLVED –

That the Prevention Improvement Plan highlight report, summarising the progress made against the measures required to secure long-term improvements to Prevention delivery in Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) be noted.

OA32 2021-22 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised Members that this report provided a review of annual performance in relation to the Authority's 2020-2025 Corporate Plan objectives focusing on incidents in homes, workplaces, whilst travelling and in wider community settings. It covered the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. Whilst the impact of the pandemic on incident numbers the Service attended during 2020/2021 was clear to see, in most cases, incident numbers had returned to the pre-pandemic trends. A summary of key indicators was shown, and these indicated significant improvement/change against five-year averages across most key indicators. In particular, accidental dwelling fires was down 6%, chimney fires down 21%, and deliberate secondary fires down 12%.

RESOLVED –

Community
Safety and
Safe
guarding
Manager

That the outturn performance against the outcome measures specified in the Corporate Plan 2020-25 be noted.

OA33 TREASURY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE 2022/23 – QUARTER 2

The Principal Accountant advised Members that this report was the Treasury Management Performance report for financial year 2022/23, April to September. The report showed the accrued interest earned for 2022/23 April to September was £83k, which was £68k higher than the budget set for the same period. Therefore, the Authority had already achieved the budget set for the full financial year 2022/23.

In terms of investments, as at 30 September 2022, the Authority had £19.6m invested in various counterparties including, banks, buildings societies, Money Market Funds and current accounts. By March 2023 this would reduce to approximately £15m. As Members would see from the Investment chart, there were deals maturing on a frequent basis to ensure the Authority was able to meet its short term expenditure requirements. A maturing loan with PWLB for £620k had been repaid. This loan repayment did not impact on the revenue budget. The next loan was due to mature in March 2024 and this was for £1m.

The Principal Accountant advised Members that the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) had increased the base rate three times since the last meeting. To 1.75% in August, then 2.25% in September and most recently 3% in November, which was the highest rate since November 2008 and 0.75% increase was the highest single step increase since 1989. The next review date was 15 December 2022, and the treasury advisors were projecting the base rate to increase again and could potentially hit 5% in the coming months. The Authority would benefit from these rates, when reinvesting surplus funds and therefore generate additional income for the Service. The Authority currently had three £1m investments of 5% or more.

The Principal Accountant advised Members that for 2023/24 budget setting, a provisional increase in the investment budget by £240k had been added, this would bring the budget to £270k. This would be monitored during 2022/23 to ensure this figure would be achievable during 2023/24. Finally, the cashflow position was monitored on a regular basis to ensure the Authority could meet the short-term expenditure requirements and maintain adequate liquidity.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

OA34 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

By virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as the report contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of a person (including the Authority); and on these grounds it was considered the need to keep information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

OA35 LOCAL PENSIONS BOARD UPDATE

The Committee considered the report, details of which were noted in the confidential/exempt minutes.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

OA36 FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

OA37 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the date of the next Overview and Audit Committee meeting would be held on Wednesday 15 March 2023 at 10.00am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12:03