

# **SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

## **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**20 NOVEMBER 2023**

PRESENT: Councillor T Smith (Chair)  
Councillors: S Alston, S Ayris, D Hutchinson, A Dyson, C Pilkington  
and J Taylor

A Dyson, C Pilkington and J Taylor  
(Independent Members of the Audit & Governance Committee)

S Ghuman, H Impey, C Smallman and D Thorpe (Barnsley MBC)

DCFO T Carlin and L Haigh  
(South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue)

A MacDonald (Internal Audit – RSM UK Risk Assurance Services)

### IN ATTENDANCE

REMOTELY: P Hewitson (External Audit - Deloitte)

#### 1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were noted as above.

#### 2 ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

#### 3 URGENT ITEMS

None.

#### 4 ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED - That agenda item 16 entitled 'Member only session with external/Internal Audit' be considered in the absence of the public and press.

#### 5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS IN RELATION TO ANY ITEM OF BUSINESS ON THE AGENDA

None.

6 REPORTS BY MEMBERS

None.

7 TO RECEIVE ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC, OR COMMUNICATIONS SUBMITTED BY THE CHAIR OR THE CLERK AND TO PASS SUCH RESOLUTIONS THEREON AS THE STANDING ORDERS PERMIT AND AS MAY BE DEEMED EXPEDIENT

None.

8 MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 11 September 2023 be agreed and signed by the chair as a correct record.

9 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the 2022/23 Audit and Governance Committee Work Programme and were reminded that they could nominate topics for consideration at future meetings.

RESOLVED - That Members:-

- i) Considered and agreed the updated Work Programme.
- ii) Considered and agreed to nominate topics for future meetings.

10 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS UPDATE REPORT

A MacDonald provided Members with an updated Internal Audit Progress report which included a summary of the results against the plan.

The Committee was informed of an update to Appendix A of the report following changes from Contract Management.

Overall, the update was positive, the team were on track to finish the Audit as planned and a draft report would be submitted in January for feedback from Members.

RESOLVED - That Members:

- i) Considered and received the report.
- ii) Approved the updates to the Internal Audit Plan.

11 QUARTER 2 TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2023/24

H Impey presented the Quarter 2 Treasury Management Report for 2023/24. The report covered the following key areas:

- The agreed Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24.
- An economic summary for the year to date.
- An update on the Authority's borrowing and investment activities.
- The Authority's Prudential and Treasury Indicators.

The Committee commented on the usefulness of the benchmarking data and requested that it also be available in future reports.

RESOLVED - That Members:

- i) Noted the latest expectations for interest rates.
- ii) Noted the activities undertaken during the year to support the Authority's borrowing and investment strategies.
- iii) Noted the Authority's Prudential and Treasury Indicators.

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12 INFORMATION GOVERNANCE UPDATES

T Carlin provided the Committee with the Information Governance Update report which presented combined information on South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue's compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation and requests received under the Freedom of Information Act.

Councillor Alston queried if the increase in the number of requests related to a specific area or if it was on ongoing trend. T Carlin stated the increase had related to subject access requests from public interest in the Service however there were no specific trends to note. T Carlin continued that partial responses were also published to the website. Appendix A of the report highlighted a summary of all Freedom of Information Requests from the period 1 February 2023 to 31 July 2023.

A Dyson asked how the Freedom of Information Requests were submitted. T Carlin stated that the service website included a page specifically for requests which were then sent directly to Data Protection Officers for determination.

A conversation arose around officer workload and the hours needed to compile responses depending on the type of request received. T Carlin explained that the Service was supported by legislation to quote fees for the time taken to compile a response if the request was deemed to be excessive.

RESOLVED - That Members:-

- i) Noted the good data protection and compliance progress by the DPO working with the Senior Information Risk Officer and other officers across SYFR.
- ii) Noted the good work in training SYFR staff.
- iii) Noted the processing of incidents over the last 6-month period.
- iv) Noted the increase in Subject Access Requests and that all were responded to within 1 month.
- v) Noted the increase in the number of FOI requests and the percentage responded to within 20 working days.

### 13 COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS MONITORING REPORT

T Carlin presented Members with the Compliments and Complaints Monitoring Report during the 6-month period between 1 February 2023 to 31 July 2023.

The key points to note were as follows:

- The Service recorded 30 externally received compliments, a 58% decrease from the previous 6-month period (71).
- 14 compliments mention attendance and quality of work of staff.
- 11 related to visits and events attended by the Service.
- 3 were for rescues of people or animals or assisting with other services.
- 1 related to staff conduct and appearance and donations/charitable works.
- Over the same period, the Service initially received 21 complaints from members of the public, 1 of which was withdrawn.
- 2 transferred to the Police and Culture and 1 to Community Safety (leaving 17 to be processed a 21% increase on the previous period).
- 6 complaints were upheld.
- 1 partially upheld and 10 not upheld.
- SYFR received no complaints of the 17 processed.
- 8 related to operational incidents, 3 regarding personnel, 2 vehicle/driving and 1 each for administration (Business Safety, Community Safety and miscellaneous).
- 9 complaints related to the Sheffield area (Including HQ, Training and Development Centre).
- 2 each for Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster, 1 covered more than one area and 1 where no location could be assigned.

- 14 of the 17 complaints were provided with a response within the 20-working day target, 3 took 21, 25 and 37 days to complete.

RESOLVED - That Members:-

- i) Noted the number of compliments received.
- ii) Noted the increase in the number of complaints received and processed.

14 EXTERNAL AUDIT VERBAL UPDATE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

Members of the Committee were provided with a verbal update from External Audit. In terms of the 2021/22 workload officers explained that progress was underway in the majority of areas and work had commenced on the 2022/23 audit.

The plan was to bring the 21/22 financial statement and VFM work to the January Committee and then to conclude the 22/23 financial statement by the March meeting, discussions would take place with the relevant teams to ensure the timescales were appropriate.

RESOLVED - That Members of the Committee noted the update.

15 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and the public interest not to disclose information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

16 MEMBER ONLY SESSION WITH EXTERNAL / INTERNAL AUDIT

At the conclusion of the meeting a Member only session was held with External and Internal Audit colleagues.

CHAIR