

Agenda Item 9

AT A MEETING of the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee of
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at the Castle, Winchester on Monday,
26th July, 2021

Chairman:

* Councillor Liz Fairhurst

* Councillor Jonathan Glen

* Councillor David Fuller

* Councillor David Harrison

Councillor Ian Stephens

* Present

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Ian Stephens.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful of their duty to disclose at the meeting any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest they had in any matter on the agenda for the meeting, where that interest was not already in the Authority's register of interests, and their ability to disclose any other personal interests in any such matter that they might have wished to disclose.

No interests were declared.

3. **MINUTES OF HFRA STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - 24 FEBRUARY 2021**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 24 February 2021 were reviewed and agreed.

4. **DEPUTATIONS**

There were no deputations for the meeting.

5. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements to make, but welcomed newly appointed Members to the meeting.

6. **INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT AND OPINION 2020/21**

The Committee received a report of the Chief Internal Auditor on the Internal Audit Annual Report 2020/21.

The report was introduced and it was noted that as it considered progress in 2020/21, prior to the new combination with the Isle of Wight, the report related to Hampshire only. Members heard that there was overall reasonable assurance,

that this was in the context of a positive direction of travel over recent years and the Authority was going from strength to strength and seeing ongoing improvement. It was confirmed that “reasonable” was the second level of assurance and was a good balance between covering key risks without stifling operation.

The training system updates detailed in the report were discussed and highlighting the importance of thorough training records being kept it was noted that six of the eight actions in the report were already complete and the final two would be completed by the end of September. Documentation of the resolutions and actions of the Committee in their scrutiny of the audit process was discussed and it was noted that the existing Committee reporting process provided a robust mechanism for issues to be identified by Members, transparently recorded and followed up on by officers where appropriate. It was recognised that identifying and addressing issues demonstrated a positive audit process and agreed that a review of the actions in the report would be considered at a future meeting.

The recommendations in the report were agreed and it was

RESOLVED:

That the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority Standards and Governance Committee accepts the Chief Internal Auditor’s annual report & opinion statement for 2020/21.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2021/22

The Committee received a report of the Chief Internal Auditor on the Internal Audit Progress Report 2021/22.

The report was introduced and it was highlighted that it was a regular update to the Committee, which included oversight of ongoing live audit reviews. The ability to quantify outcomes of the audit process was discussed and it was confirmed that actions were agreed with senior management and significant issues or areas with limited assurance would receive more follow-up. The possibility of randomised reviews of outcomes for additional assurance was considered and it was recognised that this would not be an effective use of resources, but that any areas of concern emanating from the regular progress report could be referred by the Committee for further audit. Details of how emerging risks, including those relating to Covid-19 would be identified were also set out.

The recommendations in the report were agreed and it was

RESOLVED

That the progress in delivering the internal audit plan for 2021/22 and the outcomes to date be noted by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority Standards and Governance Committee.

8. INTERNAL AUDIT MANAGEMENT ACTIONS PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Chief Fire Officer on the progress of Internal Audit Management Actions.

The report was introduced, it was confirmed that the direction of travel was good and progress on key actions was highlighted. The allowances handbook project was highlighted and it was heard that this had been put into place following significant work on payroll mechanisms. Further work would be carried out to ensure everyone was being paid in accordance with the handbook.

The recommendations in the report were agreed and it was

RESOLVED

That the Standards and Governance Committee notes the continued progress made towards the implementation of the internal audit management actions and the delivery of the audit plan.

9. EXTERNAL AUDIT PLANNING 2020/21 ACCOUNTS

The Committee received a report of the Chief Fire Officer on the external audit arrangements for the 2020/21 statutory accounts in light of the continuing impact of Covid-19 both on the overall timescales and audit resource availability.

The external auditor introduced the report highlighting the different areas of risk and how they would be monitored. It was confirmed that if anything urgent or significant were identified then the Committee would receive a report to its next meeting and not wait for the annual report.

The recommendations in the report were agreed and it was

RESOLVED

That the Standards and Governance Committee notes the current position in respect of audit planning and delivery for the 2020/21 accounts.

10. FIRE PENSION BOARD ANNUAL REPORT (2020/21)

The Committee received a report of the Chief Fire Officer setting out the annual report of the Hampshire Fire Pension Board and summarising the work of the Board for the 2020/21 financial year in the exercise of its functions.

A number of potential liabilities identified in the report were discussed and the context around them explained. It was agreed that the Chairman of the Hampshire Fire Pension Board would be invited to future meetings where the pension scheme was being discussed.

The recommendations in the report were agreed and it was

RESOLVED

That the content of the report be noted by the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee

11. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/21

The Committee received and considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer setting out the Annual Governance Statement which formed part of the annual accounts process and would be signed by the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer.

The recommendations in the report were agreed and it was

RESOLVED

That the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 as set out in Appendix A be approved by the Standards and Governance Committee:

That Members acknowledge that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the Framework 2016.

That the approved AGS be included into the Annual Statement of Accounts, to meet the Authority's statutory requirement.

12. ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2020/21

The Committee received a report of the Chief Fire Officer setting out the Annual Statement of Assurance.

The Assurance Statement was introduced and the Committee noted that as it was retrospective for 2020/21, the Isle of Wight Council would separately approve their own, but it was included for reference. The opportunity to include staff and community wellbeing was discussed and Members noted that consideration was being given as to how this could be measured and shared going forward.

The recommendations in the report were agreed and it was

RESOLVED:

That the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance be approved by the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee.

Chairman,