

AT A MEETING of the HFRA Standards and Governance Committee held at Fire and Police HQ, Eastleigh on Tuesday 22 October, 2019

Chairman:

* Councillor Liz Fairhurst

Vice-Chairman:

* Councillor Sharon Mintoff

* Councillor Jonathan Glen

Councillor Geoffrey Hockley

* Councillor Roger Price

*Present

84. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Hockley.

85. 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.

86. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on the 23 July 2019 were reviewed and agreed.

87. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations on this occasion.

88. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements to make on this occasion.

89. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2019/20

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Internal Auditor providing an overview of the progress of internal audit work for the period ending August 2019 (Item 6 in the Minute Book). The report was introduced and Members were led through the appendix which summarised the activities of Internal Audit for the period. Section 4 of the appendix highlighted the outstanding and overdue actions, progress in relation to these would be detailed in a report following next on the agenda. The limited assurance opinion for sick pay was explained as set out at section 5, and it was heard that the current process could potentially lead to sick pay overpayment which did require management action to address. A query was raised in relation to whether this applied to the different conditions of service books, and officers would look into this. In relation to the rolling work programme at section 7, it was noted that all items should be completed by the end of the year.

RESOLVED:

That the progress in delivering the internal audit plan for 2019/20 and the outcomes to date were noted by the Standards and Governance Committee.

90. **INTERNAL AUDIT MANAGEMENT ACTIONS PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee received the internal audit management actions progress report (Item 7 in the Minute Book). The report was introduced and it was heard that the Service had been making good progress to oversee the implementation of internal audit recommendations. Attention was drawn to paragraph 10 of the report and it was noted that there were now 5 high priority management actions which were overdue against their original target date, and not 6 as reported. The high priority actions were related to safeguarding and business continuity, and it was reported that a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) policy would be taken to the internal Executive Group meeting for approval in the next few days, as well as wider progress in this area with an ongoing gap analysis based on the receipt of a full DBS compliance report from the HCC Insights Team.

The Chairman was content with the direction of travel and thanked officers for the report.

RESOLVED:

That the significant progress made towards the implementation of the internal audit management actions was noted by the Standards and Governance Committee.

91. **COMPLAINTS REPORT 2018-2019**

The Committee received a report of the Chief Fire Officer detailing complaints received during 2018-2019 (Item 8 in the Minute Book). It was heard that the report was requested by the Committee as a result of considering the Information Compliance Report 2018-19 at their previous meeting.

Members were led through the report and it was explained that there had been a total of 65 complaints during the financial year 2018-2019, and of these, 45 were dismissed and 20 were upheld. Officers explained that the dismissed complaints were due to lack of evidence or contrary evidence. Of the 20 complaints upheld, 11 had related to conduct, and these had been addressed with the utmost priority through training or raising awareness with individuals. Other complaints which had been upheld related to out of date information on the HFRS website and lack of judgement when uploading posts to HFRS official Twitter accounts. It was noted that 3 complaints had been upheld in relation to unsafe driving, and not parking a fire appliance in an appropriate manner. Officers also highlighted that over this period, the Service had received hundreds of compliments.

Members raised questions in relation to the complaints upheld pertaining to conduct, and it was heard that the nature of these complaints were mostly due to the attitude of staff and how they had engaged in the course of their duties. It was also explained that firefighters received training before conducting safe and well visits to members of the public. Members queried about parking complaints, and it was heard that dismissed cases were in relation to fire appliances responding to an incident. In response to a Member query, it was noted that individual firefighters would receive recognition and possible commendations for compliments received.

In response to queries in relation to Service Identification (ID) cards, it was heard that the Service was currently looking to replace the current access control system and ID cards. Members discussed the possibility of introducing Braille to ID cards to assist partially sighted and blind people should Firefighters need to visit their home, and requested that officers explore the possibility of this further. Members agreed to endorse the Service's performance and commitment to complaints management rather than to note, and this would be reflected in the recommendation.

Members thanked officers for the well written report.

RESOLVED:

That the Service's performance demonstrated within the report and its commitment to complaints management was endorsed by the Standards and Governance Committee, and the Committee asked that the Service explore the provision of braille on ID badges.

92. **HMICFRS ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee received the HMICFRS Action Plan Progress Report (Item 9 in the Minute Book). The report was introduced and the background to the Action Plan was explained which had resulted from the findings of the HMICFRS inspection report. Members heard that some diagnostics had been completed, and in relation to *"The Service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders"*, it was noted that this completion date had been extended to March 2020 so the new personal development plans could incorporate new Service values and behaviours, which were being developed following ongoing workshops with staff.

In relation to “*The Service does not do enough to be an inclusive employer*” which had been identified as a ‘cause for concern’ area by HMICFRS, it was highlighted that a wide range of work had been initiated to address this in six specific areas which were set out at paragraph 15 of the report. Attention was also drawn to paragraphs 17-18 which detailed other ways the Service was addressing the ‘cause for concern’ area and it was heard that good progress was being made.

In response to Member queries it was heard that the next HMICFRS inspection could take place as early as next April, but all the main actions would be completed by then, with some further actions ongoing. It was noted that Members would be kept updated with progress and it was highlighted that the Service would be undertaking a self-assessment as part of the planning process for the next inspection. Members agreed to endorse the positive progress rather than to note, and this would be reflected in the recommendation.

RESOLVED:

That the positive progress made towards the delivery of the HMICFRS Action Plan was endorsed by the Standards and Governance Committee.

Chairman,