

|  |
|--|
| <b>Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee</b> |
|--|

**19 June 2023 at 10:30 hours**

Conducted as a public meeting at Headquarters and digitally via  
Microsoft Teams

**Present:** Councillor Jalil (Chair), Councillor Barrie, Councillor Atwal  
and Councillor Little (observing)

**Virtually:** John Mathews (Internal Audit), Alan Tranter (Pension Board  
Representative), Satinder Sahota (Monitoring Officer)

**Officers:** Richard Stanton, Kal Shoker, Kirsty Tuffin, Mike Griffiths and  
Tom Embury.

**22/23 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Miks and  
Councillor Spence (substituted by Cllr Atwal) and Karen  
Gowreesunker.

**23/23 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest registered.

**24/23 Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 20 March  
2023**

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 20  
March 2023 were approved as a correct record.

**25/23 Matters Arising**

No matters were raised.

**26/23 Corporate Risk Update**

Richard Stanton, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the  
Corporate Risk report that provided an overview of all aspects  
relating to the management of the Authorities Corporate Risks.

The Committee were advised that the report covered a six-month period for Quarter 3 and 4 2022-2023. The key figures highlighted for Quarter 3 were as follows, as per report:

1. Corporate Risks 2.2, 2.3, 4.1, 5.2, 8.1 and 8.2 were awarded a green confidence (substantial) opinion. The highest level that could be awarded.
2. Corporate Risks 1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 5.1 and 7.2 were awarded an amber (satisfactory) confidence opinion. In all cases, work was in progress to enable for a green rating to be attained.
3. Corporate Risks 6.1, 7.1 and 7.3 were awarded a red (limited) confidence opinion, due to the inadequacy of key internal controls being in place.

The key figures highlighted for Quarter 4 were as follows, as per report:

1. Corporate Risks 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 5.2, 8.1 and 8.2 were awarded a green confidence (substantial) opinion. The highest level that could be awarded.
2. Corporate Risks 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 5.1 and 7.2 were awarded an amber (satisfactory) confidence opinion. In all cases, work was in progress to enable for a green rating to be attained.
3. Corporate Risks 6.1, 7.1 and 7.3 has been awarded a red (limited) confidence opinion, due to the inadequacy of key internal controls being in place.

Following queries around the functions in place for red risks, Richard Stanton, advised the Committee that where the service is able to take action to reduce the risk this would be actioned however, some risks remained the responsibility of the Authority and until agreed, would remain as the current rating.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Corporate Risk Summaries (Quarter 3 2022/23, Appendix 1 and Quarter 4, 2022/23, Appendix 2) be approved.

2. That it be agreed that the management of Corporate Risk and in particular the addition of a new Prevention Corporate Risk No 3.3 be noted.

27/23 **Annual Internal Audit Report 2022-2023**

John Mathews, Internal Auditor, presented the Annual Internal Audit Report 2022-2023 that outlined the work conducted by the Internal Auditors undertaken in 2022-2023.

The Committee were advised that based upon the work conducted and the implementation by management of the recommendations made, the internal audit provided a reasonable assurance that the Fire Authority had adequate and effective framework of governance, risk management and control. This would feed into the annual Governance Statement submitted for Audit and Risk Committee approval, as per agenda pack.

The work conducted had been positive with only a small number of recommendations made to the service. There had been no significant matters and management had accepted all work/recommendations submitted, as per report. The Data Protection work had begun slightly later, in comparison to the others, however, it still looked positive, and it had not been anticipated there would be anything significant found.

John Mathews advised that as part of the Audit work, customer satisfaction questions were issues for all audits conducted. Overall, the Service had rated the services satisfaction of 4.8 out of 5 (very good).

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Annual Internal Audit Report 2022-2023 be approved.

28/23 **Governance Statement 2022-23**

Mike Griffiths, Section 151 Officer, presented the Governance Statement 2022-23 report that outlined identified risks faced by the Authority in its achievement of the Authority's policies, aims and objectives and the likelihood of those risks and how they would be managed.

The Committee were advised that the governance statement would coincide with the Statement of Accounts, due to be available in September 2023. The Governance Statement would require the signature of the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer. Mike Griffiths advised the Committee that the Authority had produced a Corporate Strategy that set out objectives and provided regular performance monitoring to measure the Authorities objectives and was subject to regular review. The excellent relationship with both internal and external auditors was also highlighted. The Governance Statement 2022-23 would be submitted to Fire Authority on 26 June 2023.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Governance Statement 2022-23 report be approved.

29/23 **Monitoring Policies on Raising Concerns at Work – Whistleblowing Policy and Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000**

Satinder Sahota, Monitoring Officer, presented the Monitoring Policies on Raising Concerns at Work – Whistleblowing Policy and Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 report that outlined (if any) whistleblowing allegations reported through the whistleblowing policy for the periods from 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2023.

The Committee were advised that during the period 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2023 there were three reports submitted through the confidential reporting line for whistle blowing allegations. All three reports related to one department. During the same period, no requests to enact the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 in West Midlands Fire Service had been received.

Resolved:

1. That it be noted that during the period of 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2023 the 3 reports submitted be noted.

2. That it be noted that during the period of 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2023 there had been no requests to enact the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 in West Midlands Fire Service.

30/23 **Pension Board Update**

Alan Tranter, current Chair of the Pension Board, presented the Pension Board Update report that outlined the work of the Pension Board to the Audit and Risk Committee in its capacity as the Scheme Manager for the West Midlands Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

The Committee were advised that with assistance from Officers, a work programme for the Pension Board had been maintained in line with the action plan, attached as appendix a. The Pension Board Terms of Reference had been updated following the Scheme Managers decision in March 2023, to remove the capacity for an Independent Chair and had been attached as appendix B. Alan Tranter advised the Committee that it had still been the preference of the Board to have an Independent Chair on the Board.

Following a query from a member of the public, Tom Embury, Deputy Clerk, advised the Committee that there had still been some issues ongoing with the pension system. Work was being conducted with Oracle to resolve.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the progress on key actions included within the Pension Board Action Plan (included in Appendix A), which included the specific Actions agreed with The Pension Regulator for completion by June 2023, be noted.
2. That it be agreed that the proposed updates to the Pension Board Terms of Reference as outlined in Appendix B, be approved.
3. That it be agreed that the Minutes of the last Pension Board included in Appendix C, be noted.

31/23 **Update on Topical, Legal and Regulatory Issues (Verbal Report)**

Mike Griffiths advised the Committee that external auditors had signed off their unqualified opinion on the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts in March 2023.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that updates on Topical, Legal and Regulatory Issues be noted.

32/23 **Audit and Risk Committee Work Programme 2022-2023**

Tom Embury presented the Audit and Risk Committee Work Programme for 2022-2023 that outlined the planned agenda items for future scheduled Audit and Risk Committee meetings.

Resolved:

1. That the Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2022-2023 be approved.

33/23 **Any other Business**

There was no other business raised.

34/23 **Date of next meeting – Monday 24 July 2023**

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the date of the next meeting – Monday 24 July 2023 be noted.

35/23 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved:

1. That the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Paragraph 3 of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006."

36/23 **Workshop for Members on Statement of Accounts**

Mike Griffiths advised the Committee that not all issues had been resolved with external data used for the draft Statement of Accounts and therefore the workshop would need to be deferred.

It was agreed that the workshop be re-scheduled as an informal meeting for members before the next Committee meeting.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the workshop be re-scheduled as an informal meeting for members before the next Committee meeting.

37/23 **Committee Members Private Meeting with External Auditors**

The Committee were advised that no updates were required and the private meeting with external auditors was no longer required.

The meeting closed at 11:08 hours.

Kirsty Tuffin  
Strategic Hub  
0121 380 6906  
[Kirsty.tuffin@wmfs.net](mailto:Kirsty.tuffin@wmfs.net)