

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY
GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 MARCH 2026

PRESENT: Independent Co-opted Members Chris Brown (Chair), Karen Cowan, Melissa Dearey, and Nigel Saxby.

Officers Present: Antoinette Diovisalvi – Joint Deputy Chief Finance Officer/Deputy S.151 Officer, Donna Chambers – Assistant Director of People and Culture, Richard Gibson – Area Manager of Service Improvement, Jason Kirby – Area Manager of People and Culture, Dan Meeke – Area Manager of Public Safety and Resilience, Steve Duffield – Area Manager of Emergency Response, Shaun Edwards – Head of Finance, Jamie Morris – Head of Corporate Assurance, Gareth Naidoo – Senior Corporate Assurance Officer, Dominic Purchon – East Riding District Manager, Natalie Simm – EDI Officer, David Robinson – Internal Audit (TIAA), Lisa Nicolson – Monitoring Officer/Secretary, and Rob Close – Committee Manager.

Rejoice Mapeto (Forvis Mazars) was in remote attendance.

The meeting was held at the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Kingston upon Hull.

11/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – Apologies for absence were received from Gerry Wareham.

12/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – No declarations of interest were made with respect to any items on the agenda.

13/26 MINUTES – Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2026 be approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Minute 06/26 be amended to read, “The Committee suggested external anonymous reporting routes, including Crimestoppers, HMRC anonymous reporting and Action Fraud, should be more explicitly referenced within the policies to strengthen staff assurance and confidence in reporting concerns ~~safely~~ *anonymously*....”.

The Committee sought clarity on the guidance given on Pension opt-outs. It was advised that, while no investment advice was offered, staff were advised of the impact of opting out of the pension scheme might have on their eligibility for ill health retirement.

14/26 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS – The Committee received reports from TIAA, the Service’s internal auditors, outlining internal audit activity since the previous meeting. It was reported that no amendments had been made to the Internal Audit Plan, no instances of fraud had been identified, and no final audit reports had been issued since the meeting held on 9 February 2026. Members were advised that three audits had commenced during the reporting period, namely ICT Management Controls, Key Financial Control, and the contingency audit on Talent Development, for which draft reports would be issued in due course.

Resolved – That the report be received.

15/26 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2026/27 – The Committee received a report of the Head of Corporate Assurance presenting the draft Internal Audit Plan for 2026/27. The report explained that the Annual Plan set out the proposed audit assignments to be carried out during 2026/27, together with the planned times and high-level scopes for each assignment. It was noted that the audits identified in the Plan would support the Head of Internal Audit’s annual opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Service’s framework of governance, risk

management and control, and that the audit scopes had been informed by the Service's assurance framework, risk registers, Service Improvement Plan, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) findings and recommendations, Fire Standards, National Operational Guidance and key emerging themes.

In presenting the report, the Internal Auditor (TIAA) explained that the total number of audit days had increased from 65 to 72, reflecting an uplift of one day across the global audit plan. Members were advised that the Committee could either proceed with the Plan as presented or, should it wish to retain the previous level of 65 days, remove an audit from the programme. In response, the Head of Corporate Assurance suggested that this point would be given further consideration as part of finalising the Plan.

The Committee also asked whether any additional audit services were expected to be required during the Plan period. In response, the Head of Corporate Assurance advised that none were envisaged at the present time, although this could be explored in future if necessary. The Internal Auditor (TIAA) added that such services were available if required, although it was hoped they would not be needed.

Recommended to the Fire Authority – That the Internal Audit Annual Plan 2026/27 be approved.

16/26 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE STRATEGY 2026/27 – The Committee received a report of the Joint Deputy Chief Finance Officer / Deputy Section 151 Officer presenting the Treasury Management and Capital Expenditure Strategy 2026/27. The report set out the Prudential Indicators for Treasury Management and Capital and the Treasury Management Strategy Statement proposed for adoption for the financial year 2026/27. The Authority's Constitution required that the Policy Statement was approved by the full Fire Authority and this responsibility could not be delegated. Also outlined was the recommended policy to be adopted in respect of creating the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for 2026/27, in line with the statutory requirements set out in The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and 2017.

Reference was also made to the liability benchmark, with it being reported that a revenue funding approach to capital expenditure was being used while interest rates remained high. Members were further advised of the indicators relating to the operational boundary and the authorised limit, and were informed that, should borrowing approach the Service's debt limit, Members would be notified accordingly. Attention was also drawn to the indicator concerning borrowing costs charged to the revenue budget, where a level of up to 5 per cent was described as reasonable, and to the maturity structure for borrowing, which was managed so as to avoid borrowing at the same time for cash flow reasons.

In relation to the Investment Strategy, it was reported that security and liquidity remained the Service's priorities. Members were advised that investments were made with a range of counterparties, for periods of no longer than one year, and only with counterparties holding a F1 rating.

In discussion, the Committee raised the potential impact of wider uncertainty on the Service's financial projections, including geopolitical instability and the Fair Funding Review. In response, the Joint Deputy Chief Finance Officer / Deputy Section 151 Officer advised that modelling had been undertaken in relation to conflict in Iran, particularly in respect of possible effects on fuel and utility costs. She explained that the Service was also considering whether discretionary capital expenditure might need to be phased, and that suppliers were being engaged with and contracts kept under review. It was noted, however, that gas prices were fixed until 2027 and electricity prices until 2028, while the fuel contract was due to expire at the end of the 2025/26 financial year and there had been no request to bring this forward.

The Committee explored the Service's approach to borrowing in what was acknowledged to be a volatile environment. In response, the Joint Deputy Chief Finance Officer / Deputy Section 151 Officer explained that the Service had not taken long-term borrowing for some time, instead short term borrowing as and when appropriate. Long-term borrowing was more likely to be considered when interest rates fell to around 2.8 per cent, and that, over the next five-year period, short-term borrowing would be the preferred option.

The Committee requested that future reports make clear which limits were statutory and which reflected local discretion.

The Committee received assurance that there had been no non-specified investments made for periods exceeding one year.

Recommended to the Fire Authority – That the Authority approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2026/27.

17/26 STRATEGIC RISK UPDATE – The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Corporate Assurance providing an update on the Service's Risk and Opportunity Management framework.

It was explained that risks were identified systematically in a structured way across directorates and projects, with detailed descriptors, ratings for likelihood and impact, and clear assignment of risk owners and responsible persons. This ensured comprehensive coverage and accountability for each risk.

Risks are evaluated using a matrix that combined likelihood and impact to generate a priority score. This enabled the organisation to focus resources on the most critical risks and opportunities, aligning with the Service's risk appetite statements. Each risk was assigned a treatment strategy (accept, treat, transfer, or avoid) and internal control type (preventative, detective, or directive). Mitigations and controls were documented, tested, and regularly reviewed to ensure effectiveness and compliance.

In line with its Constitutional requirements, (Article 6: Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee), the Committee was responsible for providing independent advice and recommendations to the Fire Authority on the adequacy of the governance and risk management frameworks, internal controls, and financial reporting Functions included:

- Reviewing the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval.
- Considering the framework of assurance and ensuring it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the Authority.
- Monitoring the effective development and operation of risk management, reviewing organisational risk, and monitoring the adequacy of management action in addressing risk-related issues reported to them.
- Reviewing arrangements for the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm from fraud and corruption and monitoring the effectiveness of anti-fraud related policies.

The Committee considered the five strategic risks currently on the Risk and Opportunity Register, with a particular focus on Financial Constraints: National Grant Funding (Risk Reference 2023/24 – Fca).

Recommended to Fire Authority – That the Authority take assurance of the maintenance, monitoring and management of the Risk and Opportunity Management framework, including the identification and management risk.

18/26 SCRUTINY ITEM: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION – The Committee received a report of the Head of Organisational Development, presented by the EDI Officer, providing an overview of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion following a previous scrutiny request for detailed updates on three key areas: Equality Impact Assessments, EDI Priorities, and

Staff Forum Groups. Significant progress had been made since EDI responsibilities transferred to Corporate Assurance and a dedicated EDI Officer was appointed. This had resulted in a strengthened and more consistent equality impact assessment (EIA) process, improved quality assurance, enhanced use of Assurance Monitoring for monitoring, and new guidance to build staff understanding and confidence. Staff forum groups had also been revitalised, with renewed governance, stronger links to Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) Equality Ambassadors and increased activity across four active networks.

The Service had refreshed its statutory EDI priorities for 2025-29 and developed a supporting 12-month delivery plan to ensure actions were aligned with organisational strategy. Work would now focus on improving quantifiable measurement of progress to support transparency, evidence-based decision-making and organisational accountability. Additional developments, including the establishment of the EDI Committee, a comprehensive EDI Hub on SharePoint, and the transition of the EDI Officer role to a permanent position, demonstrated sustained commitment to embedding inclusion and driving positive cultural change across the Service.

The Committee then considered the following areas:

- **Staff Forum Group** - The Committee sought clarification on the position in relation to a dedicated LGBTQ+ Staff Forum Group. In response, the EDI Officer advised that a group of that nature had not had sufficient momentum to continue. She explained that the Service continued to encourage staff involvement in this area through other avenues and was seeking to strengthen its approach, noting that the Service maintained a strong level of engagement with Pride activity. In response to a further question, she did not consider that the absence of a forum reflected a fear of discrimination, but rather the fact that the organisation was relatively small and not highly diverse, meaning that the pool of staff available and willing to establish and sustain such a forum was limited.
- **External Support and Representation** - The Committee asked whether external support or networking opportunities were encouraged. In response, the EDI Officer advised that opportunities for collaboration with police networks were currently being explored, together with the potential for wider national engagement.
- **Wider EDI Leadership and Assurance** - The Committee noted that the EDI Officer had been offered the position of Chair of the NFCC regional EDI Board.
- In concluding discussion, the Committee welcomed the benefit of having a dedicated resource in this area and commented positively on the work being undertaken to strengthen the use of Equality Impact Assessments, noting in particular the value of the approach in increasing staff understanding and confidence.

Members commended the Service's approach and progression of its equality, diversity and inclusion responsibilities.

Recommended to Fire Authority – That the Authority be assured that the Service's progression of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is performing well.

19/26 SCRUTINY ITEM: GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY PHASE 2 REPORT – The Committee received a report of the East Riding District Manager providing an update on the implications of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report for Humberside Fire and Rescue Service. The report explained that Phase 2 of the Inquiry had concluded following a four-year examination into the Grenfell Tower tragedy of 2017, with the final report published on 4 September 2024. It was noted that the report contained 58 recommendations aimed at strengthening fire safety, regulatory oversight, emergency preparedness and sector-wide capability.

The report further explained that, whilst many of the failings identified were specific to the circumstances at Grenfell, the Inquiry had emphasised the need for all fire and rescue services to examine their own preparedness, organisational learning, control room arrangements, operational planning and staff competence. In that context, it was noted that Humberside Fire and Rescue Service had already undertaken substantial work following Phase 1 of the Inquiry, including enhancements to operational equipment, breathing apparatus communications, operational command training and high-rise firefighting procedures. Phase 2 had then enabled the Service to build on that foundation and ensure that nationally identified improvements were reflected locally.

The Committee was advised that, of the 58 recommendations arising from Phase 2, 12 were directly relevant to fire and rescue services, including recommendations to HMICFRS and the NFCC, and that a further two had potential implications for Humberside Fire and Rescue Service in relation to the definition of high-risk buildings within the Building Safety Act and fire engineering competence. The report stated that a full assessment of each relevant recommendation had been undertaken and that the Service had completed all applicable actions. It was further noted that the report incorporated independent assurance from the recent NFCC Grenfell Workshop hosted by the Service and also set out the Service's position within the wider national context through the Grenfell Tower Inquiry progress tracker, demonstrating continued alignment with emerging national practice.

The Committee then considered the following areas:

- **NFCC Role** – The Committee welcomed the Service's involvement in supporting this area of work through the NFCC, noting positively the role being undertaken.
- **Multi-Agency Practice** – The Committee also welcomed the strength of the multi-agency approach undertaken by the Service and the good practice demonstrated.

Recommended to Fire Authority – (a) That the Authority be assured that the Service has completed all relevant actions arising from the Phase 2 report of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

(b) That the Authority note the findings of the NFCC workshop, which confirms the strength of the Service's arrangements and identifies only a small number of development opportunities that the Service is already addressing.