

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

At a meeting of the **Audit and Risk Committee** held remotely on **25 February 2021** at **10:00 hours**.

Present:	Cllr John Turnbull (Chair)
Durham County Council:	Cllrs Brian Avery, D Bell, L Marshall and E Scott
Darlington Borough Council:	Cllr G Lee
Officers:	Tony Hope (TH), K Lazzari
Internal Audit:	Tracy Henderson
External Audit (Mazars):	G Barker (GB) and C Deardon

Part A

The chair welcomed Tracy Henderson to her first meeting.

1 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 October 2020 were agreed as a true record.

3 Corporate Governance Acton Plan

T Hope introduced the report which provided an update on the progress being made in relation to the actions arising from the development of the Authority's corporate governance arrangements. The action in relation to COVID-19 was discussed.

ACTION: Members **noted** the contents of the report and the ongoing work in relation to the corporate governance arrangements of the Authority.

4 Corporate Risk Register – Position at 31 January 2021

T Hope introduced the report which provided details of the corporate risk register as at 31 January 2021. New risks, risks which had increased or reduced in severity were discussed.

Cllr Lee queried industrial action, T Hope noted the service had a resilience plan in place.

ACTION: Members **considered** the risk register report.

5 Internal Audit Progress Report

T Henderson introduced the report which advised members on the work undertaken by internal audit between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. It was noted that within the reporting period no limited assurance opinions had been provided and 14 reviews including 5 carried over from 2019/20 were scheduled to completed in 2020/21.

Cllr Lee queried why the ICT strategy had not been audited. T Henderson noted that this strategy had been deemed to be robust and it was agreed beneficial for other areas to be audited first.

Action: Members **considered** the outturn position in delivering the internal audit plan for 2020/21 together with the comments made by managers in responding to the work of internal audit to gain assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control environment.

6 Head of Internal Audit Annual Opinions: Addressing the risk of a limitation of scope

T Henderson introduced the report which provided members with information about some recently issued guidance published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in relation to Head of Internal Audit (HIA) Annual Opinions: Addressing the Risk of a Limitation of Scope. Members were informed that as Internal Audit will have completed a significant proportion of planned activity for 2020/21 by the year end, they should be in a position to issue an audit opinion as originally planned. **ACTION:** Members **noted** the report.

7 Audit Plan 2021/22

T Henderson introduced the report which provided members with the opportunity to view the content of the Internal Audit plan for the period 1 April to 31 March 2022.

ACTION: Members **agreed** the internal Audit Plan for 2021/22.

8 Internal Audit Charter

T Henderson introduced the report which sort members approval to the Internal Audit Charter last agreed in February 2020 to be applied to all reviews undertaken as part of the Internal Audit plan for 2021/22.

ACTION: Members **agreed** the Internal Audit Charter.

9 External Audit Progress Report

C Dearden presented the report which updated the Committee on the progress made in delivering responsibilities as the Authorities external auditors, set out

any non-audit assurance work carried out and summarised key national publications. No significant matters were identified.

Cllr Lee queried why value for money had been removed. It was noted that this was now picked up throughout the external auditors reports.

ACTION: Members **noted** the report.

10 Audit Fee Variation Letter

G Barker presented the report which updated the members on the additional external audit fee for 2019/20 which had been previously highlighted.

ACTION: Members **noted** the report.

11 Annual Audit Letter

C Dearden presented members with the Annual Audit Letter which summarised the work that the external auditors had undertaken for the year ended 31 March 2020.

ACTION: Members **noted** the report.

12 Consultation on Amendments to the Accounts and Audit Regulations Letter from MCHLG

T Hope introduced the report noting a letter received from MCHLG which gave notice to the extension to publishing local authority audited accounts to 30 September for two years and draft accounts to be published on 31 July.

ACTION: Members **noted** the report.

L Marshall, on behalf of the committee, thanked Mazars, internal audit, T Hope and his team for all the work that had been undertaken with regards to audit work.

PART B

13 Internal Audit outstanding actions

T Henderson provided an overview of the five recommendations

ACTION: Members **noted** and **approved** the revised target dates.