

Minutes of the **County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service Audit and Finance Committee meeting** held at Fire HQ on **28 September 2022 at 10:00hours**.

**Present:** Cllr R Bell (Chair)  
**Durham County Council:** Cllrs N Jones & Cllr J Blakey (substitute for Cllr Kellett)  
**Darlington Borough Council:** Cllr Linda Hughes (substitute for Cllr Crumbie)  
**Officers:** Keith Lazzari  
**Internal Audit:** Tracy Henderson and David Mitchell  
**External Audit (Mazars):** Gavin Barker and Campbell Dearden

**Part A**

**1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Crumbie and Cllr Batey.

**2 Minutes of the Previous Meetings**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 31 March 2022 were agreed as a true record apart from one amend.

Item 4 "Discussion followed on the weighting of the individual audits and it was noted that each audit had the required numbers of days allocated to it".

**3 Audit Completion Report 2021/22**

G Barker noted that the 2020/21 Audit Completion report certificate was still not yet issued. Cllr Bell reassured members that this was seen as a technicality and Mazars unqualified opinion wouldn't change.

G Barker introduced the report for 2021/22 and C Dearden summarised the audit opinion. The value for money work is yet to be completed. Furthermore, elements relating to whole of government accounts are still to be finalised as information is still awaited from the National Audit Office. An unqualified opinion was anticipated.

Cllr Bell noted the uncertainty in government funding.

C Dearden asked for Mazars thanks to be passed onto T Hope, J Whitfield and their team for assistance with the audit completion work.

The report was noted.

**4 Annual Internal Audit Opinion and Report 2021/22**

T Henderson introduced the report which set out details of the work carried out by internal audit during 2021/22. Internal audit had issued a moderate overall assurance opinion for 2021/22.

Cllr Bell clarified the moderate rating which was seen as a sound system of control.

Cllr Hughes queried moderate assessments for GDPR, CRM and ICT systems. K Lazzari noted that this showed there were areas for improvement which were worked upon and that moderate opinion was satisfactory.

The report was considered and noted.

**5 Annual Review of the System of Internal Audit 2021/22**

K Lazzari introduced the report which requested members consider and comment on the annual review of the system of internal audit.

T Henderson noted that Internal Audit had undergone an external quality assessment by CIPFA which concluded that they fully conformed to the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

The report was considered and noted.

**6 Fraud and Corruption Annual Report 2021/22**

T Henderson presented the report which provided advice and assurance to members regarding the work being undertaken within the Authority in seeking to identify, control and prevent fraud and corruption.

The report was noted.

**7 Internal Audit Progress Report 2021/22**

T Henderson introduced the report which advised members on the work undertaken by Internal Audit between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022.

Discussion followed on the status of the reviews that had taken place during the period. Cllr Bell commented that it was pleasing to see performance indicators exceeding target.

The report was considered and noted.

**8 Internal Audit Progress Report 2022/23**

T Henderson introduced the report which advised members of the work undertaken by internal audit from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The status of audits and the revised timetable were discussed, further updates would be provided at the next meeting.

The report was considered and noted.

## 9 Corporate Risk Register

K Lazzari introduced the report which provided members with the corporate risk register at 31 August 2022. The risks were discussed in turn.

FIN 152 - K Lazzari noted that a further update would be presented at the Strategic Planning Day.

ER 222 - Cllr Bell asked for information on the derelict building working group that had been set up. Cllr Hughes asked for Darlington to be involved with this group. A request will be made to the working group for consideration.

Cllr Hughes queried energy costs in relation to the risk register. K Lazzari stated that it was encompassed in FIN153, although commentary may be amended in future to reflect the relative importance of this.

The report was noted.

## 10 Update on the Independent Review of Local Authority Financial Reporting and Audit (Redmond Review)

K Lazzari provided members with an update on the consultation outcome of the local audit framework: technical consultation and reminded members of the paper presented to the fire authority seeking an independent member for the group.

The report was noted.

## 11 Short Term Investments – Period to 31 March 2022 (Quarter 4)

K Lazzari provided the committee with an update on the performance of the Authority's short-term investments for the period ended 31 March 2022.

The report was noted.

## 12 Short Term Investments – Period to 30 June 2022 (Quarter 1)

K Lazzari provided the committee with an update on the performance of the Authority's short-term investments for the period ended 30 June 2022.

The report was noted.

### Actions

|   | Who | Action                                                                             | Date |
|---|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | KL  | Pass thanks to T Hope, J Whitfield and finance team for assistance with audit work | ASAP |

|   |    |                                                                                       |      |
|---|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 2 | KL | Provide information to committee on derelict building group                           | ASAP |
| 3 | KL | Pass on Darlington BCs keenness to be involved in the derelict building working group | ASAP |