

Minutes

Audit Committee

Date: 25 April 2025

Time: 10:30

Venue: FSHQ

Present:

Cllr Renshaw (in the chair) Cllrs Buckley, Parnham and Wood

In Attendance:

Gareth Mills, Chris Schulz (External Auditors Grant Thornton), Simon Straker (Internal Auditor, Kirklees) Paul Burnham (Independent Person for Audit)

Apologies:

Cllrs Ahmed and Carlisle

44.Minutes of last meeting held on 27 February 2025

Resolved

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2025 be signed by the Chair as a correct record

45.Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

46.Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

47.Admission of the public

There were no items requiring the exclusion of the public and press.

48.Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to any item of business on the agenda.

49.Abridged Performance Management Report

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Corporate Services which informed members of the Authority's performance against Key Performance Indicators where targets are not being achieved during the period 1 April 2024 and 16 February 2025.

Members noted there was just one red indicator in the report which was Fire Related Fatalities.

Resolved

That the report be noted

50.Risk Management Strategy Group Quarterly Report

Members were presented with a report from the Director of Corporate Services giving details of the risk management activity and developments reported to the Risk Management Strategy Group (RMSG) in March 2025 and highlighting any future risks or risk related areas.

Members were advised there are 43 risks on the register, including 7 very high risks. In the period considered, 15 risks have been reviewed and in addition 19 risks that had not moved in terms of overall risk scores were also reviewed. The report detailed 2 risks where the scores had been changed; Risk INDA1.S – 'Industrial dispute resulting in reduced levels of service and effect on reputation (incl. ASOS)'. The score has reduced from 16 to 12 and Risk DOPP1.S – 'Deviation of policies and procedures from national guidance – possible litigation and damage to reputation'. The scoring has been increased from 6 to 9.

Members challenged the report author on the frequency the risks are reviewed and sought confirmation they are reviewed annually as a minimum.

Resolved

That the report be noted

51.Annual Update from SIAT

The Director of Corporate Services presented a report detailing the work completed by the Service Improvement and Assurance Team (SIAT), including information regarding the internal and external assurance processes of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Members received the report positively and were pleased to note the successful reality testing processes. Members welcomed the non-blame culture and were interested to

learn how the processes have been developed to encourage learning and make staff feel empowered. Members were informed that managers are supportive and quick to react to positive changes and that the processes would be expanded across all departments as the benefits are clear. Members were pleased to learn the dashboard, which the team have developed, is now used across many Fire and Rescue Authorities and that reality testing is recognised by the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) as good practice.

Members discussed responsibility and governance of Fire Standards.

Resolved

That the report be noted

52.Accounting Policies

The Director of Finance and Procurement presented a report detailing the accounting policies that will be applied in the preparation and presentation of the Statement of Accounts 2024/25.

Members were advised that it was good practice for the Audit Committee to review the relevant policies used in preparation of the Authority's Statement of Accounts and the policies that would be followed in the preparation of the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts were set out at Annex A to the report now submitted. Members noted that there has been one material change in the accounting standard policies included within the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts, relating to the treatment of leases under IFRS16.

Members welcomed the report being brought to their attention in advance of the preparation of the 2024/25 accounts and thanked the report author for highlighting the changes for 2024/25.

Members were given clarification that the exceptional items mentioned in the report are extremely rare and would only relate to a multi-million expenditure.

Resolved

That the report be noted

53.Internal Audit Quarterly Report

The Director of Finance and Procurement submitted a report which provided a summary of the audit activity for the period January to March 2025.

In the period three audits have been completed, two received positive assurance; National Fraud Initiative 2024/25 and Absence Management and one received limited assurance; Commercial Premises Risk Management System. Members were assured this will be subject to a follow up audit later in the year.

Members challenged the report author on the follow up and implementations of recommendations following each audit and were assured the limited assurance given to the Commercial Premises Risk Management System is a technical issue that is in the process of being resolved.

Resolved

That the report be noted

54.Internal Audit Annual Report

Members considered a report of The Director of Finance and Procurement which provided a review of the Authority's system of internal audit and control and the Audit Charter & Strategy, and which asked Members to note the audit opinion on risk management and internal control during 2024/25 and approve the Audit Plan for 2025/26.

The report concluded that overall, the Authority's systems of internal audit are effective and the Authority's governance, risk management arrangements and internal control environment were effective and robust during the financial year to 31 March 2025. The report confirmed that there are no Significant Governance Issues that are required to be included in the Draft Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 and that the Draft Audit Plan for 2025/26 has been agreed.

Members challenged the report author to confirm that the resources to complete the audits for 2025/26 are available.

Resolved

- a) That the report be noted
- b) That the Audit Plan for 2025/26 be approved

55.Audit Charter and Strategy

Members considered a report of The Director of Finance and Procurement which provided details of the new professional Audit Standards and the new Internal Audit Strategy and Charter.

Members discussed whether resources are available to complete random audits or whether planned audits are more effective as they can be arranged in accordance with resources and pre-arranged events. It was agreed that random audits are very rare as they focus on large cash reserves and security of paper records, which are no longer relevant.

Resolved

- a) That the report be noted
- b) That the Audit Strategy and Charter be approved

56.External Audit Plan Update

Members received a report from the External Auditors, Grant Thornton, detailing the Audit Plan for 2024/25.

Members welcomed the report, in particular the clear signposting and calendar of events. Members challenged the report author on the planned materiality figure, Management override of controls and collaboration with the internal auditors.

Resolved

That the report be noted

Chair