

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

9 FEBRUARY 2023

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Edna Finneran, Harry Gorman, Janet Grace, Lennie Hinnigan, Andrew Makinson and Hugh Malone

Also Present: Chief Fire Officer Phil Garrigan, Director of Finance and Procurement Ian Cummins, Monitoring Officer Ria Groves

Apologies of absence were received from:
Mr Anthony Boyle

1. Preliminary Matters

Members considered the identification of declarations of interest, any urgent additional items and any business that may require the exclusion of the press and public.

RESOLVED that

- a) no declarations of interest were made by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the agenda;
- b) no additional items of business to be considered, as matters of urgency, were determined by the Chair; and
- c) no items of business required the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof because of the possibility of the disclosure of exempt information

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 27th September 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

3. 2021/2022 Auditor's (Grant Thornton) Annual Report

Members received a verbal summary of the annual report from Georgia Jones (Grant Thornton).

Councillor Andrew Makinson queried the Authority's use of Crown Commercial Services as an intermediary for the new electricity supplier contract and if there was an alternative that would be better value for money. The Members were advised that it was in their remit to decide where they obtain their utilities and that the auditors were reviewing current arrangements.

It was noted that moving forward management of that particular contract would be more rigid to ensure that any issues could be identified at an early stage. When asked if it would be more cost effective for the Authority to manage the contract in-house, Ian Cummins explained that the Service doesn't employ energy market experts and through Liverpool City Council the Authority has benefitted over the last twenty years or so from using their in-house experts. In addition the new contract, approved by the Authority, covers the energy supply over the next three years and over that period additional controls have been put in place to manage and monitor the contract.

With regard to the recommendations made by Grant Thornton, Councillor Gorman asked if utilities contract management was an issue that has arisen recently. It was explained that the report was reflective and that Grant Thornton's recommendation over the future management of the utilities contract had in fact already been implemented at the start of 2022/2023.

RESOLVED that the contents of the auditor report be noted

4. Grant Thornton (Audit) Progress Report and Sector Update

Members received a summary of the progress report by Georgia Jones, with a focus on delivery, the 22/23 Financial Statements and value for money work.

RESOLVED that the contents of the auditor report be noted

5. Financial Review 2022/23 - October To December

Director of Finance and Procurement Ian Cummins gave a summary of the report which detailed the Authority's revenue and capital budgets, reserves and treasury management updates up to 31st December 2022.

RESOLVED that

- a) noted the contents of the report
- b) approved the proposed revenue and capital budget alignments;
- c) approved the use of the £0.250m forecast favourable revenue variance to fund an increase in the Capital Reserve in order to reduce future debt servicing costs; and
- d) instruct the Director of Finance and Procurement to continue to work with budget managers to maximise savings in 2022/23.

6. Internal Audit Progress Report - April to December 2022

Director of Finance and Procurement Ian Cummins gave a brief summary of the report, which sought to update Members on the progress of the 22/23 internal audit plan as approved by the Audit Committee in June.

RESOLVED that the contents of the audit report be noted

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 24th May 2023