



COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

21 MARCH 2017

REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Fire Authority on the outcome of a review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Authority that has recently been undertaken by Durham County Council's Internal Audit Service.

Background and Scope of the Review

2. A request was received from the Chief Fire Officer following approval at the Combined Fire Authority's meeting of 08 September 2016 for a review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Authority to be undertaken.
3. The Authority was created by the Durham Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996. Whilst the membership and effectiveness of the Authority had not previously been reviewed, three strategic drivers linked to the Policing and Crime Act 2017 (Role of Police and Crime Commissioners), the outcomes of the Adrian Thomas Review (Member number, level of commitment and scrutiny) and that it is good governance to undertake period reviews of arrangements meant that it was now an opportune time to do so.
4. The review which consisted of a desktop examination of evidence that had either been provided directly by the Service or that had been extracted from the Fire Service's website, attendance at meetings of the Combined Fire Authority held on 24 November 2016 and 09 February 2017 and a meeting with the CFA Chair and Vice Chair and meeting with the Head of Corporate Resources considered the following seven questions:
 - The cost of running the Authority in comparison to other Combined Fire Authorities (CFAs);
 - Membership of the Authority;
 - How effective the Authority is in relation to scrutinising the decisions of officers;
 - How effective the Authority is in relation to scrutinising the performance of the Service;
 - How willing and able is the Authority to make difficult decisions;
 - How effective the Authority is in relation to engaging with key stakeholders including: staff; key partners; and the community; and
 - How effective the Authority is in driving collaboration.

Outcome of the Review

5. The review, completed in the form of an Internal Audit Report and attached as Appendix 1, provided a Substantial Assurance Opinion in relation to arrangements in place with one Medium Priority finding raised.

Recommendation

6. Members are requested to **consider** the findings of the review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Authority together with the intended course of action proposed by the Chief Fire Officer in looking to address the one Medium Priority action identified with the action plan contained within the report.

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