

Minutes of the **County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service Audit and Finance Committee meeting** held at Fire HQ on **30 November 2022 at 10:00hours**.

Present:	Cllr R Bell (Chair)
Durham County Council:	Cllr J Blakey
Darlington Borough Council:	Cllr Chris McEwan
Officers:	Tony Hope and Keith Lazzari
Internal Audit:	Nicola Cooke
External Audit (Mazars):	Gavin Barker and Campbell Dearden

Part A

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr N Jones

2 Minutes of the Previous Meetings

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 September 2022 were agreed as a true record apart from one amend.

Cllr J Blakey listed as a substitute for Cllr B Kellett in error.

3 Follow up Letter relating to Audit Completion Report

G Barker confirmed that they were now in a position to issue an unqualified audit opinion following today's Committee due to the good work carried out by CDDFRS officers and the Mazars team.

C Dearden summarised content of the Audit Completion Report letter regarding outstanding matters and conclusions that have been reached. Cllr Bell queried if errors will be addressed to ensure they don't reoccur in future years. C Dearden noted that it was a smooth audit with very few errors with the CDDFRS Finance Team producing a good set of statements.

4 Statement of Accounts for the Year end 31 March 2022

T Hope introduced the report seeking Members' approval of the Statement of Accounts for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority, for the financial year ended 31 March 2022.

Cllr Bell asked members to draw their attention to appendix A of the report which provides a clear explanation of the accounts.
The report was considered and noted.

5 Revenue and Capital Outturn 2021/22

T Hope introduced the report providing information on the 2021/22 revenue and capital outturn compared with the original budget.

T Hope summarised the reasons for significant variations from the budget for both capital and revenue and members were requested to note the outturn position for the financial year ended 31 March 2022.

The report was considered and noted.

6 Annual Governance Statement

K Lazzari presented the report providing members with details of the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for approval.

Cllr Bell asked if there is a timescale and indication of how the Hackett Review will impact on the service. K Lazzari noted that additional contents of the Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators are included within the new Building Fire Safety (BFS) strategy. A new staff structure for BFS has also been approved by the Service which will increase capacity in the BFS team.

Further Government grant funding totalling £114,000 was also awarded in 2021/22 to support fire safety which will enable the Service to enhance its BFS capability to meet the expectations outlined by Government.

The report was considered and the AGS was approved.

7 Forecast of Outturn 2022/23

T Hope introduced the report providing an indication of the Service's revenue and capital financial outturn position based upon expenditure and income to the 30 September 2022.

Based upon expenditure and income to 30 September 2022, the forecast revenue outturn position to the 31 March 2022 is an overspend of £0.386M.

Based on the latest available information the capital budget forecast outturn position is an underspend of £1.217M compared to the revised budget.

A breakdown of expenditure and income compared to the budget was provided to members. T Hope noted that all efforts to mitigate the forecasted overspend are being taken.

Cllr Bell thanked the Finance Team for their hard work on the service budgets.

The report was considered and noted.

8 Corporate Governance Action Plan Update

K Lazzari introduced the report updating on the progress being made in relation to the actions set out in the Corporate Governance Action Plan.

Cllr Bell made comment regarding non-financial risks and the impact reduced resources will have on these.

Cllr McEwan asked if the service will receive a critical point in terms of senior management capacity. T Hope noted that although senior management capacity is stretched, discussions are ongoing regarding possible saving options in order to re-focus budgets and ensure critical services are not affected.

The report was considered and noted.

9 Short Term Investments - Period 30 September 2022 (Quarter 2)

K Lazzari introduced the report updating on performance of the Authority's Short-Term Investments for the period ended 30 September 2022.

The report was considered and noted.

10 2023/24 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan

T Hope presented the report advising members of the proposed timetable for the consideration and approval of the 2023/24 budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The position regarding settlement funding for individual authorities will not be known until the provisional settlement is announced in December. The council tax referendum limit will be formally announced alongside the provisional settlement.

Further work has been undertaken to develop options to deal with a significant reduction in funding should the need arise.

It is envisaged that the Committee will recommend an outline revenue and capital budget for 2023/24 together with an associated Medium-Term Financial Plan. The Fire Authority will consider these recommendations at the meeting on the 15 February 2023.

Cllr Bell asked for a reminder email to be sent to all members of the Audit and Finance Committee to encourage their attendance at the next meeting scheduled for the 26th January 2023.

ACTION: T Hope to issue an email to all members of the Audit and Finance Committee regarding attendance at the next meeting on the 26th January 2023

The report was considered and noted.

Actions

	Who	Action	Date
1	T Hope	To issue an email to all members of the Audit and Finance Committee regarding attendance at the next meeting on the 26 th January 2023	ASAP