

SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, AUDIT & PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2023 IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OR REMOTELY VIA TEAMS

9. PRESENT:

Councillor

Left

S Evans (Chair)

J Morgan (Deputy Chair)

I Buckley

P Ford

M Al Nuaimi

M Powell

G Williams

C Wright

Torfaen

Blaenau Gwent

Vale of Glamorgan

Bridgend

Newport

Monmouthshire

Rhondda Cynon Taff

Caerphilly

APOLOGIES:

D Isaac

B Proctor

ACO G Thomas

Merthyr Tydfil

Cardiff

Monitoring Officer

ABSENT:

OFFICERS PRESENT:- Mrs S Watkins – Deputy Monitoring Officer & Head of Corporate Support, ACFO D Rose – Director of Service Delivery, Mr C Barton – Treasurer, Mrs L Mullan – Temp Head of Finance, Procurement & Property, Mrs H Cargill – TIAA Internal Auditor

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Members declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in each agenda item which affected their Authority.

Councillor Evans declared a personal interest in any items which related to New Inn Fire Station.

Councillors Evans and Morgan both declared a personal interest as Members of the Gwent Public Service Board.

11. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair had no announcements to make.

12. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous Finance, Audit & Performance Management meeting held on 24 July 2023, were received and accepted as a true record of proceedings.

13. REPORTS FOR DECISION

13.1 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND REVENUE BUDGET UPDATE REPORT

The Treasurer presented to Members the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2022/2023 to 2026/2027 for approval. It included budget projections based on the Authority's plans and strategies informed by the general financial and operational environment in which services were provided.

The Strategy indicated that the Authority's cost base would continue to increase over the currently approved budget in response to the general inflationary pressures in the UK economy. The cost pressures were compounded by unforeseen under-provision in the current financial year. This would present a challenge to the Fire Authority and potentially to the Service's funding from councils next year.

The Strategy was drawn up in the light of rapidly changing economic projections and few firm resource commitments beyond the current year. This background introduced significant financial risks to the Strategy. Whilst it was tempting to consider the information in the report a worst-case scenario, this was far from reality given the current volatility in the UK economy and public finances.

RESOLVED THAT

Following a question and answer session on issues with Grant Funding from the Welsh Government, Members agreed to note the risks and uncertainties within the projections and approved the Strategy as the basis for financial planning over the Strategy period.

13.2 REVENUE MONITORING REPORT 2023/2024

The temporary Head of Finance & Procurement informed Members that the Revenue Monitoring report provided details of the Annual Revenue Budget and associated information for the year ending 31 March, 2024.

RESOLVED THAT

Following a question and answer session on the possibility of making efficiencies and savings, as well as the overspend on energy costs, Members agreed to note the content of the report.

13.3 CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2023/2024

The temporary Head of Finance & Procurement informed Members that the Capital Monitoring report provided details of the Capital Budget, transactions to date, and the forecast year end position for the year ending 31 March, 2024.

RESOLVED THAT

- 13.3.1 Members agreed to note the budget and progress of capital schemes, and approved the alterations identified in Appendix 1 and associated movements in funding.
- 13.3.2 Following a lengthy question and answer session, Officers assured Members that they would continue to monitor the consultancy and legal costs and agreed to circulate a copy of a report on the Raac concrete survey work which had recently been carried out on all premises across the Service.

13.4 2022/2023 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW

The temporary Head of Finance & Procurement presented a report for Members to review the Treasury Management activities for the year ending 31 March, 2023, in accordance with the Authority's approved Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/2023.

RESOLVED THAT

13.4.1 Members agreed to recommend to the full Fire & Rescue Authority Committee to note the annual Treasury Management review data for 2022/2023.

13.4.2 Members agreed to recommend to the full Fire & Rescue Authority Committee they approve the actual prudential and treasury indicators set therein.

14. REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

14.1 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT & AUDIT ACTION UPDATE

The TIAA Internal Auditor presented a report which updated Members upon progress being made against the Internal Audit Plans for 2022/2023 and 2023/2024.

RESOLVED THAT

Members agreed to note the internal audit recommendations and work completed to date on the Internal Audit Annual Plan.

14.2 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The ACFO Service Delivery presented the Performance Monitoring report to Members for their information.

RESOLVED THAT

Following a question and answer session on the stats for Water Rescue and Bariatric incidents compared to other Emergency Services, Members agreed to note the presented report and its contents.

14.3 HEALTH CHECK OF PRIORITY ACTIONS AND Q1 PROGRESS AGAINST THE STATUTORY PIs

The Head of Corporate Support provided Members with a brief overview of the Priority Actions and Quarter 1 progress against the statutory PIs.

RESOLVED THAT

- 14.3.1 Members agreed to note the presented report and its contents.
- 14.3.2 With reference to the recent introduction of the new 20 mph speed limited in a number of residential areas, and whether it would affect the turn-out times for On-Call firefighters, Officers assured Members that they would continue to monitor the situation over the next twelve months.

15. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Deputy Monitoring Officer provided Members with the Forward Work Programme for 2023/2024.

RESOLVED THAT

Members agreed to note the content of the Forward Work Programme for 2023/2024.

16. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT (PART 1 OR 2)

There were no further items of business to consider that the Chair deemed urgent.