



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

MINUTES

AUDIT COMMITTEE

DATE	Thursday, 23 July 2026	TIME	10.00 am
VENUE	Microsoft Teams - Virtual		

Minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of Audit Committee held Microsoft Teams - Virtual on Thursday, 23 July 2026

Present:

Marta Phillips OBE, Independent Member (Chair)

Kay Boycott, Independent Member

Seyi Obakin OBE, Independent Member

Martin Spencer, Independent Member

In Attendance:

Nastasha Naidoo, Senior Audit Manager, Ernst and Young

David Esling, Head of Audit and Assurance

Mostaque Ahmed, Director for Corporate Services

Spencer Sutcliff, Deputy Commissioner and Operational Director for Prevention, Protection & Operational Policy

Thomas Goodall, Assistant Commissioner Risk, Assurance, Strategy and Portfolio

David O'Sullivan, Head of Strategic Finance

Senita Rani Robinson, Professional Head of Data & Improvement

Andrew Beesley, Head of Governance

Anna Flatley, Governance Manager

Adam Norris, Strategy and Performance Adviser

1. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

The Chair noted that Adam Norris, Strategy and Performance Advisor London Fire Brigade, Greater London Authority was attending as an observer, and welcomed him to the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair noted that she had participated in the external quality review of Internal Audit which would be covered later on the agenda. She noted that she also had a follow up one to one meeting with David Esling, Director of Audit, Risk and Assurance Services.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 5 May 2026 were agreed as a correct record and the updated actions noted. There were further updates as follows.

AC54/6 Changes to LFB Board Meetings/ Risk

Further to discussion it was agreed that this action be closed as it would be ongoing and as such, liaison regarding it would continue between the Chair of Audit Committee and senior officers. The Chair noted that she was planning on attending a meeting of the Risk and Assurance Board within the following few weeks. A specific action to programme a series of risk deep dives was agreed.

ACTION - The Head of Governance to schedule a programme of deep dives on risks to the Audit Committee to co-ordinate with the work programme of the Risk and Assurance Board.

AC60 The Committee be informed as to when the training for staff on Person in Charge of premises responsibilities would be implemented.

The Chair reported that she had had a discussion with Craig Carter, Assistant Commissioner Learning & Professional Development, who provided an update and subsequently guidance and background information was circulated to the Members of Committee. It was therefore agreed to close this action, noting that this would be reported as part of Internal Audit reports and would be followed up again at that point as appropriate.

AC66 - The Chair to liaise with officers on approach to reviewing risk appetite position.

It was noted that the risk appetite review statement has been shared with the Chair for awareness and comment and she noted that this was a marked improvement, It was agreed that this action should be closed.

AC67 - Officers to review options to simplify declaration of interest form.

The Committee noted the update in the actions update paper, specifically that the form used for declarations of interest was the one used by the GLA as part of the Group Corporate Governance Agreement for which the LFC was a signatory. Consideration was being undertaken as to whether the accompanying guidance notes could be updated, which was noted. The Committee also stated that the easier the form, the higher the completion rate was likely to be. A further update would be provided to a future meeting.

AC68 – The Committee be provided with the results of the external assessment of the LFB's audit charter gap analysis.

It was noted that the result of the review had been received and an update would be provided under item 6 of the agenda. It was therefore agreed that this action be closed.

The Committee then discussed the Committee's terms of reference, and in particular point 1.6 i.e. advising the LFC according to good governance principles and whether this should include a review of the overarching governance framework set down by the Greater London Authority. The Head of Governance noted that the LFB did regularly review compliance and would share that information with the members of the Committee and then a decision could be made as to whether to consider this further. The Chair asked that an update on this matter be provided to the next meeting of the Committee.

ACTION – An update on the Audit Committee Terms of Reference in regard to the governance framework be provided to the next meeting of the Committee.

4. LFC Executive Summary of Current Events

The Deputy Commissioner, followed by the Director for Corporate Services, gave a verbal update which the Committee then discussed. Issues raised and discussed included the following.

Impact of Iran War - Significant arson incidents continued as a consequence of the geo-political situation and the LFB continued to play an active role with partners to deal with the wider implications. The ongoing work with the communities which arose from the situation was substantial. Further to discussion, the Deputy Commissioner assured the Committee that the threats from Russia, including cyber ones, were also being monitored. It was noted the LFC was advised on geo-political threats through formal links with government national security sources.

It was confirmed that the broader costs arising from these conflicts such as interest rates and borrowing were being carefully assessed and included in the case presented to the GLA and central government for additional funding as discussed in detail at the last meeting.

Heat /Wildfires – The impact of the weather in terms of wildfires and increased numbers of drownings were discussed. The Committee noted that this was a very busy period operationally and welcomed the fact that there was a dedicated team to deal with wildfires. It noted that there were four dedicated appliances which dealt with wildfires and that these resources were also being deployed outside of London. The financial impact was recognised and the Committee queried whether seasonal factors were incorporated into the budget process

Further to questions, the Deputy Commissioner commented that the increased agility in terms of response to adapt to changing levels of risk had helped in meeting changing demands. In addition the use of modern technology was being utilised where possible. It was noted that the Brigade was undertaking a trial on lightweight Personal Protective Equipment and subject to the results of this trial, as well as financial implications would consider procurement of these.

Financial Implications – The Committee discussed in more detail the financial impacts of geo-political events, including Inflation, contracts, overtime, pay and borrowing costs as well as the fact that there were new government Ministers. It was reported that discussions with the Mayor's office continued around lobbying central government for funding for LFB to reflect the risk in London and the LFB's role in national security.

New Headquarters (HQ) – It was noted that the planning permission for 8 Albert Embankment had now been approved, with formal approval to follow, which included the redevelopment of Lambeth fire station. It was noted that it would not be completed until around 2029. Interim accommodation had been secured on three floors at Tintagel House near Vauxhall and the LFB would start to occupy it in phases from around mid-September to February 2027.

ICT department – It was noted that Dr Paul Mukherjee had been appointed as the new Chief Digital & Data Officer (CDDO) on 21 September, following the review of the department as discussed at the previous meeting. Julian Martin, the current Head of the ICT department, would be leaving on 30th September after 24 years in the Brigade. Dr Mukherjee is currently the Chief Technology Officer at Defra, having spent most of his career in senior digital and data leadership positions in multinational organisations in the private sector. The Committee welcomed the appointment and the planning to modernise the IT department.

The Audit Committee then noted the verbal updates.

5. Audit Planning Report 2025/26

The Director for Corporate Services introduced the item noting that it contained the audit planning report which outlined the plan for the external audit of the 2025/26 statement of accounts, which was a statutory requirement. It was noted that this had been approved by the London Fire Commissioner and had been published on the website. It was further reported that lessons learnt from the previous year had been addressed and incorporated accordingly.

The Assistant Manager, Audit, Ernst & Young (EY) then introduced the Audit Planning Report and specifically drew the Committee's attention to the three main aspects, namely risk (pages 8 and 9 of the report), Value for Money (page 11) and the timeline (page 33), which the Committee then discussed.

The Committee specifically commented that there was significant risk around this plan with the two new risks as detailed in the report, additional strategies and changes in the senior External Audit team, and asked how much consideration had been given to this. The Assistant Manager responded that lots of preparation work had been undertaken, including workshops and regular meetings with the LFC Finance Department. In addition the Audit Partner was remaining in post and this provided some continuity. The Director for Corporate Services added that joint working between Finance and EY had increased and the process had started earlier this time, which helped. Also, the Finance Department was far more stable than in the previous year which assisted. It was considered that these measures would allow for any issues that arose to be addressed more promptly.

The Committee noted that the conclusion of the Audit would be at the beginning of October which was after the next meeting of the Committee and therefore requested that a verbal update be provided to the Committee on 30 September.

ACTION – That a verbal update on the External Audit be programmed to the meeting of the Audit Committee on 30 September 2026.

6. Internal Audit - Review of 2025/26

The Director of Audit Risk and Assurance Services introduced the report by summarising the key points as set out in the report. He then summarised the overall opinion, namely that there was continued development and improvement, but further steps were required. He noted that significant investments had been made but also listed the risks and specifically highlighter the recurring theme of weaknesses in practical applications of processing policy and governance. The Committee then discussed the report and in particular the following points.

The results of the external quality assessment of Internal Audit had been received and the recommendations and any proposed responses would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee. The Director thanked the Chair of Audit Committee for meeting with the external assessor as part of the review.

ACTION – A report on the outcome of the external quality assessment be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee noted the improvements in controls and processes but expressed concern that these were not more significant. It noted that there appeared to be some contradictions in the sense overall it was a positive opinion but there were some areas where weaknesses were highlighted. Further to discussion it was accepted that 2025/26 was a period of significant change and some of the improvements had not fully materialised in time to show in this audit. The Committee was assured that there had been considerable improvements in recent months and they were expected to be evident in the next annual review.

The Assistant Commissioner, Risk Assurance, Strategy and Portfolio then commented that officers were broadly in agreement with the findings of Internal Audit and said the maturity on risk and assurance had developed considerably, with Heads of Service taking much more personal responsibility.

The Chair commented that the Audit Committee Members received the Internal Audit quarterly reports when published, so in relation to paragraph 12 of the Audit disputed that the change to reporting them to each meeting resulted in a delay to their consideration.

The delay in agreed actions being actioned. The Chair asked that in future the table setting out the follow up reviews include the year in which the original review took place, which the officers undertook to do. It was welcomed that the development of business assurance would assist in this area.

The Audit Committee then noted the report and the improvements which had been made.

7. Financial Position Quarter 4 Draft Outturn Report

The Head of Strategic Finance introduced the report which had been published on the London Datastore. He then summarised the key points as detailed in the report's summary. It was specifically noted that this was the first year for a number of years when there had been an underspend. The Committee then discussed the report, welcoming the fact that the overall savings target had been achieved and the general reserve had been restored.

The Committee noted that there had been significant change, both internal and external and asked what further changes would be required and how far was the organisation in developing its capability. Officers responded that there had been significant improvements, including within the budget process which included cross cutting reviews, as well as additional processes such as the new finance and purchasing system (SAP) and the HR and Payroll System (iTrent). It was noted that these systems had already provided improvements but once fully utilised would offer further improvements. Including more sophisticated forecasting.

The Committee also noted that the amount of savings (£28 million) had been huge and stressed the need for these savings to be embedded in this year's financial plan as there would be further financial pressures and it would become increasingly hard to achieve savings. The Director for Corporate Services acknowledged this, noting that as part of the new budget round savings ideas from all areas were being considered, and processes were being targeted. He added that for the current year there was a savings target of only £6 million. However, he added that savings could only be realised from a small part of the budget as other areas were protected and this fact was highlighted to strengthen the case for additional funding.

The Audit Committee then noted the report.

8. KPI Report Quarter 4 2025/26

The Professional Head of Data & Improvement introduced the report by summarising the key highlights as detailed in the report, which the Committee then discussed.

The Committee acknowledged and welcomed the positive performance indicators, especially on critical indicators such as injuries and deaths. With regard these, for example appliance arrival time, it was asked whether these targets were comparable with other similar fire services, for example New York, The Professional Head of Data & Improvement responded that performance was comparable with other FRSs within the United Kingdom but it was difficult to compare more widely as they had different ways of calculating performance. However this would be considered further.

The Committee also discussed control limits and noted that these were monitored regularly to reflect changing complexities, for example the increase in high rise building. Officers assured the Committee that if a shift in performance was recorded then the control limits would be assessed.

With regard red indicators, the Committee asked what steps were being taken to bring these into line, and in particular with regard to Reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences (RIDDOR). Officers reported that the number of serious incidents were very low but the increase in road traffic incidents had resulted in this being an indicator risk. This was being monitored and would be reported to the Committee in due course. In addition, the Committee asked about the follow up support work that was undertaken to support individuals who were affected. The Deputy Commissioner responded that a lot of positive steps had been undertaken in recent years in this area with trauma interventions being made in line with national guidelines.

The Committee also queried whether the paid campaigns on the Fire Safety On-line Checker were cost effective, especially in terms of whether it reached the most at risk individuals. Officers acknowledged that most high risk cases came from partner bodies, but minimal resources were used for paid marketing.

The Audit Committee then noted the report.

9. Assessment of Risk for London 2026

The Assistant Commissioner, Risk, Assurance Strategy and Risk introduced the report by providing some background information and highlighting the key points as set out in the report. The overall assessment showed that the Brigade remained well positioned to meet normal day to day demands. The Committee then discussed the report.

The Committee welcomed the fact that the draft Assessment of Risk was externally reviewed by an independent expert panel, which had endorsed the assessment as robust and leading practice. The Committee added that the LFC faced specialist risks and it was reassuring that external assessment had been used.

The Committee then noted that this report provided an assessment of where the LFC was at that point in time and asked how successful it had been in meeting risks of increasing complexity and pressure, and the success of mitigations. The Assistant Commissioner responded that the Assessment of Risk had provided the LFC with the ability to understand risk and plan for how they could evolve over the medium term. He added that it included an enhanced Horizon Scan looking out to 2030. In addition, a project to test against risks on the

risk register was being developed, as well as analysing the impact of extreme events on other risks,

The Committee agreed it was important to monitor movements in risk as a result of mitigations implemented to manage ever changing risks. The Deputy Commissioner stated that the Assessment of Risk provided a basis for the development of corporate plans including the Corporate Risk Management Plan and the Borough risk plans.

The Committee also asked about the emerging risk of growing demand relating to complex mental health issues and noted that there was considerable guidance and knowledge in partner organisations which the LFC might be able to utilise.

There were also a number of specific questions raised, including whether it was right that the perceived threat of Malicious threats and terrorism (page 333 of the agenda pack) had reduced which the report implied; and that the risk from a volcanic eruption (page 363) was higher than heat and weather. The Assistant Commissioner undertook to check and update the Members of the Committee.

ACTION – The Assistant Commissioner, Risk Assurance Strategy and Planning to confirm whether the perceived threat of Malicious threats and terrorism (page 333 of the agenda pack) had reduced and that the risk from a volcanic eruption (page 363) was higher than heat and weather.

The Audit Committee then noted the report.

10. Risk Management Strategy 2026

The Assistant Commissioner, Risk, Assurance Strategy and Risk introduced the report by summarising the key points, namely that the focus had moved from transformation to consolidation, continuous improvement, and increased maturity. He added there were three core aims – maintenance of strong foundations; improved maturity and confidence in risk assessments and increased sophistication of the framework, as detailed in the report.

The Committee welcomed the clear progress in embedding risk management into the organisation. It was asked how long term strategic risks were considered, recognising that there needed to be a balance between them and shorter term risks. The Assistant Commissioner responded that he expected as part of the development of the CRMP to have discussions about long term strategic risks and the impact they would have on meeting strategic aims.

The Committee warned that there may also be other unforeseen risks and officers noted that it was recognised that the organisation needed to tap into issues raised on the national risk register which had sophisticated horizon scanning systems, as well as other partner organisations.

The Audit Committee then noted the report.

11. Quarterly Risk and Assurance Update 2025-26 (Q4)

The Assistant Commissioner, Risk, Assurance Strategy and Risk introduced the report which provided an update on the Brigade's risk and enterprise assurance position, by providing a summary of the key points which the Committee then discussed.

The Committee welcome the fact that the overall trend for risk was positive.

It noted that two red risks, namely iTrent delivery delays and unsupported payroll, had been escalated in the last quarter, and that this had been done quickly and effectively in conjunction with the risk register.

The Committee expressed surprised that the red risk was more focused on payroll rather than the financial risk arising from the savings required. Officers responded that this was covered by the wider budget risk. The Committee then discussed whether the risks were strategic enough. The Deputy Commissioner and the Assistant Commissioner agreed that this was worth considering further but it was acknowledged that it was difficult to get the balance on the risk register right between strategic and specific risks. The Chair stressed that whilst welcoming the focus on specific risks as detailed it was important not to lose sight of the overarching issues which had a significant impact, such as carbon net zero and the geo-political situation.

The Committee noted that was one new red risk added to the register which was the Talentlink recruitment system security due to vulnerabilities in an external system handling sensitive data which was being addressed by the supplier.

With regard amber risks, the Committee then noted that there had been new areas of focus of reviews, following interest from the Deputy Mayor's office, the details of which were included in the report. It was noted that the Risk and Assurance Board had undertaken a deep dive into the Command Unit risk.

The Committee then noted that the quarter had focused heavily on HMI related assurance and this was welcomed as early preparation was recommended.

The Audit Committee then noted the report.

12. Workplan

The Audit Committee agreed the workplan, subject to the outcome of the Internal Audit external review outcome and a verbal update on the External Audit being added to the September meeting of the Committee.

The Chair noted that under item 3 it had been agreed that a programme of deep dives be agreed with the Chair and this would also be incorporated into the workplan.

The Committee also noted that Whistleblowing, Values and Ethics, which was contained in the Terms of Reference, was not in the Workplan and asked that this be considered.

ACTION – The Head of Governance to add Whistleblowing, Values and Ethics to the Workplan.

13. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

14. Dates of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Audi Committee is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 30 September at 9.30am at LFC Headquarters, 169 Union Street.

Anna Flatley, Governance Manager
Clerk to Audit Committee