

## MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S AUDIT COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 11 June 2008

Strategic Command Centre, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue  
Service Headquarters, 103 Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire,  
RG30 4FS



**Those present:** Councillor Phillip Bicknell (Member, Fire Authority)  
Councillor Chris Harris (Member, Fire Authority)  
Councillor Iain McCracken (Member, Fire Authority) (*Chairman*)  
Councillor Miss Emma Webster (Member, Fire Authority) (*part meeting*)

**In attendance:** Pat Arthur (Procurement and Facilities Manager)  
Jonathan Ball (Information Systems Manager) (*Items 03.04.08 and 03.05.08*)  
Deborah Cripps (RSM Bentley Jennison)  
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)  
Phil Sharman (Audit Commission) (*part meeting*)  
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)  
Graham West (Audit Commission) (*part meeting*)

### Action

#### 03.01.08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received from Members. Apologies were noted from Richard Taylor (Clerk and Monitoring Officer).

#### 03.02.08 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Having been reminded that, in accordance with the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct, Members were required to declare interests, which were Personal or Personal and Prejudicial, where appropriate, it was **Noted** that, on this occasion, there were no such declarations to be made.

#### 03.03.08 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 MARCH 2008

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2008 were received and **Approved** as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

#### 03.04.08 RISK REGISTER PRESENTATION

**Councillor Miss Emma Webster joined the meeting during consideration of this item, and she apologised for being delayed.**

Jonathan Ball demonstrated and described how the Risk Register is electronically managed within the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's PbViews (*computer programme*). He referred to the FireLink Risk Map and the associated risk assessments and categories, the risk methodology and control measures in place, and to the work conducted by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Risk Management Group, including the monitoring and re-assessment of risks.

In response to Members' points of clarity, Jonathan Ball confirmed that a named owner was aligned to each risk area project, with an identified plan in place, and that only the Risk Management Group could adjust the Risk Register after consideration of the projects. The Authority Treasurer reassured the Committee that the Risk Management Group met quarterly to consider at least five risk projects, and that any identified priority areas would be assessed on a more regular basis if deemed necessary. Jonathan Ball confirmed that data was available in respect to the Integrated Risk Management Plan modelling work conducted by ORH (*Mapping Company*), and that any failures in terms of incident response times were recorded on the Risk Map. The Authority Treasurer also reassured the Committee that the Fire Authority received annual reports which identified the top risks, risk scores and trends.

Jonathan Ball also referred to the work being conducted to expand data sharing with the Berkshire Unitaries. He stated that the electronic Risk Management Book, currently only available to view within the Performance Books on the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's intranet, could be made available to Members, and the **Audit Committee supported** this.

JB

**The Audit Committee Supported** the Chairman's proposal that the Committee should receive risk exception reporting as required.

AT

### 03.05.07 FIREWATCH PRESENTATION

Jonathan Ball gave a demonstration of the electronic Firewatch system used by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and described how this system was being developed as a tool to enable the recording and tracking of its assets, including personal equipment, fleet management, sites and buildings. He also referred to the work being conducted to populate the system, which he stated could take approximately 2 years or more to complete.

In response to the Chairman's questions in respect to what backup, security and support measures were in place, Jonathan Ball confirmed that:

- Firewatch was part of the three critical systems for Business Continuity, however retrieval of a back up from the Maidenhead server could potentially take up to 24 hours to retrieve.
- All personnel who use Firewatch had been issued with individual user IDs, with permissions set subject to their respective contracts, and that only two employees within the Service having total access to the system.
- Infragraphics provided the system support, with internal support being provided from within the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Information Systems Team.

**The Audit Committee supported** the Authority Treasurer's recommendation that the Committee should receive a presentation on Business Continuity at its next meeting.

**AT**  
Agenda next  
meeting

The Chairman conveyed his thanks to Jonathan Ball for his two informative presentations, and Jonathan Ball left the meeting.

### **03.06.08 EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN AND FEES (2008/09)**

The Audit Committee received the Audit Commission's draft Audit and Inspection Plan (2008/09) which included the revised fees' proposals for 2008/09.

Phil Sharman took the Committee through the salient points within the draft Plan, noting that the information and fees within the Plan would be kept under review and updated as necessary. He referred, specifically, to the Audit Committee's responsibilities and structure, and the summary of its detailed audit and inspection fees for 2008/09. He noted that the increase in its fees was due to the expanded approach to data quality work being introduced at Fire and Rescue Authorities from 2008/09. He also referred to the Auditor's report on the financial statements, the Audit and Inspection Team's work for 2008/09, and the planned outputs and resulting reports. He invited the Audit Committee to endorse the draft Audit and Inspection Plan (2008/09).

The Authority Treasurer confirmed that provision had been made within the budget for the Audit Commission's revised fees for the coming year. It was noted that, the reduction in the Audit Commission's fees for 2008/09 had been secured following the Audit Committee's previous observations and negotiation by the Authority Treasurer with the Audit Commission.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that the Recommendation presented be agreed, and this was seconded by Councillor Phillip Bicknell.

#### **The Audit Committee:**

- **Unanimously Endorsed and Agreed** the draft Audit and Inspection Plan (2008/09) and the revised Audit Committee's fees for 2008/09.

### **03.07.08 INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT (2007/08)**

The Audit Committee was provided with a summary of the outcome of internal audit activity during the last year, and of the overall Assurance Opinion on the work undertaken, as detailed in the presented Internal Audit Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 2008.

The Chairman referred Deborah Cripps (RSM Bentley Jennison) to the Minutes of the last meeting when it had been agreed that the Internal Auditors should provide a written progress report to each meeting, with exception reporting as required. Deborah Cripps stated that the presentation of the annual report superseded such an update report to this meeting, but that written reports would be provided to future meetings.

**D Cripps**

Deborah Cripps took the Committee through the Internal Audit Annual Report, and she referred, specifically, to the Statement of Assurance, the Performance of the Internal Audit, the summary of the Opinions given and the subsequent recommendations.

In response to Councillor Miss Emma Webster's request for how the baseline for the benchmarking data had been calculated, Deborah Cripps agreed to provide this information to the Members.

**D Cripps**

The Chairman was pleased with the results of the Annual Report and felt that the positive reporting should be communicated. The Authority Treasurer stated that he could incorporate this within his Annual Accounts report to the annual Fire Authority meeting in June 2008.

AT

**The Audit Committee:**

- **Unanimously Accepted** the Internal Audit Annual Report (2007/08).

**03.08.08 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Audit Committee was presented with the Annual Governance Statement and was invited to scrutinise it prior to its submission, together with the Statement of Accounts, to the Fire Authority at its annual meeting on 25 June 2008, and to comment on the proposed Action Plan for 2008/09 to address any areas of weakness.

The Authority Treasurer introduced the report and referred to the self assessment work undertaken by a Working Group to populate the required Code of Corporate Governance's six dimensions. He also referred to the review of effectiveness and measures in place to improve the Fire Authority's internal controls, and to the plan to address the governance issues identified during 2007/08, as detailed in the report presented.

The Audit Committee considered the self assessment of the Corporate Governance dimensions, and felt that the score relating to the "putting in place of effective arrangements to identify and deal with failure in service delivery", and to the score for "establishing a clear policy on the types of issues they will meaningfully consult on or engage with the public and service users about including a feedback mechanism for those consultees to demonstrate what has changed as a result" could have been scored higher.

**The Audit Committee:**

- **Agreed** that any further comments should be provided to the Committee Manager by 12noon on Friday 13 June 2008.
- **Agreed** that the Committee Manager should invite the Fire Authority Members, at their respective Party Group meetings on 25 June 2008, to consider the Fire Authority's Annual Governance Statement.

Members

LK

**Phil Sharman and Graham West left the meeting, and the Chairman conveyed his thanks to them.**

**03.09.08 PROCUREMENT DOCTOR HEALTH CHECK REPORT (ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE) (FINAL REPORT)**

The Audit Committee was presented with the Firebuy Procurement Doctor Health Check Report following the request by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to carry out a procurement health check. Pat Arthur provided an overview of the report presented, and referred to the processes undertaken, the findings and strengths of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and the suggested improvements for governance and strategy, processes, collaboration and

partnerships, training and development and contract and relationship management. She also referred to the summary of key recommendations detailed in the report presented, and confirmed that she would now develop an Action Plan as an outcome of this report.

Pat Arthur referred to the restrictions, within the Fire Services Act, that Fire and Rescue Services were not able to utilise shared services with other Authorities, and the difficulties this often caused. She referred to the draft Internal Audit Report for Purchasing/Procurement recently received and to the recommendation within the report that a review should be undertaken to establish whether the tender limit was set at the right level for the Fire Authority compared to similar organisations. Pat Arthur supported this recommendation.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster conveyed her thanks to Pat Arthur and her Team for the consistent approach taken and work conducted in respect to procurement, and this was **supported** by the Committee.

**The Audit Committee:**

- **Noted** the final report of the Procurement Doctor Health Check Report.
- **Agreed** that it should consider the full tender process undertaken in relation to the selection of a Consultant to undertake the provision of Professional Property Services with effect from 1 July 2008 until 31 March 2012, noting that the report to award the Contract would be presented to the annual Fire Authority Part II meeting.

**PA**  
Agenda next  
meeting

**03.10.08 DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)**

**The Audit Committee Agreed** that its next meeting should take place during the first two weeks in September 2008, and that the Committee Manager should convene the meeting once the Fire Authority had appointed its Members to the Audit Committee at its annual meeting on 25 June 2008.

**LK**