

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE
AUTHORITY'S AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**



Held on Wednesday 1 August 2012

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

Committee Members: Councillor Diana Coad (Cllr Emma Webster substituting)
Councillor Andrew Cumpsty
*Councillor Haqeeq Dar
*Councillor John Lenton
*Councillor Iain McCracken, Chairman
Councillor Mohammed Rasib
*Councillor Rebecca Rye
Councillor Alan Ward
**present*

In Attendance: Conor Byrne (Senior Accountant)
Yasmeen Mahmood (Haines Watts) (part of meeting)
Nick Oxborough (Group Manager, Performance Review)
Caroline Redzikowska (Director, Corporate Services)
Carolyn Rowe (Committee Manager)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Andrew Vallance (Director Resources)

Action

137. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs Diana Coad (Cllr Emma Webster substituting), Cllr Andrew Cumpsty, Cllr Mohammed Rasib, and Cllr Alan Ward.

138. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Councillors relating to items to be considered at the meeting, in accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct. There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

139. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 MARCH 2012

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2012 be approved for signing by the Chairman.

140. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 JUNE 2012

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2012 be approved for signing by the Chairman.

141. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTERS PROPERLY REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE FOR DECISION

Resolved:

- a) that the PDI Corporate Target, referred by the Fire Authority at their meeting on 11 April 2012, is subject to a separate report, item 11 on this agenda.
- b) that no other matters had been properly referred to the Committee for a decision

142. FUEL CARDS UPDATE

The ACFO declared an interest through having a personal fuel card, and it was agreed that he would leave the meeting when that aspect was under consideration. In addition, it was agreed to move into part II for part of the presentation and discussion.

Members considered the report and with reference to Appendix A asked if the total usage per station, and number of incidents where an appliance has attended could be provided.

The Chairman stated that the Committee was seeking an understanding of e usage - petrol or diesel versus the number of call outs, to better inform if it was value for money.

The ACFO advised that all front line pumps ran on diesel, that the total fuel spend is £300,000, and that £50,000 of this was on fuel cards. The log books showed the journeys.

The Committee was seeking to assess whether the figures were good, and if they could be improved – by how we supply fuel, and what fuel we use.

The ACFO confirmed this could be provided, and illustrated that the Swinley Forest Fire had used £25,000 of fuel.

It was agreed that Caversham and Crowthorne be used to more detailed information, and also that the cost of fuel per litre be provided.

Resolved:

- a) That a report be brought to the next meeting providing the additional information requested in respect of Caversham and Crowthorne, and that the cost of fuel per litre be provided.
- b) That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of this Agenda Item on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the said Act indicated and is exempt information if, and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.
- c) That the additional part II information requested be brought to the Committee at their next meeting.

143. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2011/12

The representative from Haines Watts, Yasmeen Mehmood, introduced the report, drawing attention to sections 7 and 8, and confirming the assessment at satisfactory. Of the 28 recommendations, there were no high level recommendations, 16 medium and 12 low recommendations.

At the request of the Chairman, it was confirmed that there are 4 levels of assessment: substantial, satisfactory, limited, and low assurance. With regard to both the wording - "adequate" and "no hesitation" being used in the report, it was agreed that in future there would be consistent wording.

The Committee agreed with regard to Absence Management, that it be one of the three reports agreed to be brought in detail to the Committee at their next meeting.

Resolved:

- a) That the internal audit report be Noted.
- b) That the detailed report on Absence Management be one of the three internal reports brought to the next meeting.

DR

144. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2012/13

The representative from Haines Watts, Yasmeen Mehmood, introduced the report stating that the plan had been drawn up in consultation with the Director of Resources. Members were reminded that Ernst and Young had been appointed from November 2012, and that there was a later agenda item regarding this. The plan is for 80 days which is the same as last year. The two main risks in the plan were the core financial systems and the pension review.

Resolved:

- a) That the Internal Audit Plan for 2012/13 be Agreed.
(Yasmeen Mehmood left the meeting)

145. DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2011/12

The Director of Resources introduced the paper and advised that the Chief Fire Officer, the Director Corporate Services, the Strategic Policy Programme Manager Officer and he, had undertaken the attached self assessment.

Members made a number of comments and asked that a timeline be provided by an additional column headed "when". Further amendments were suggested as follows:

Under the Plans for Improvement Column :

Under Focusing on the Purpose of the Authority on P. 30, amend "Put in place effective arrangements ... " and include an example to explain what we are trying to achieve.

Under Members and Officers Working Together on P 33, amend "The current scheme of allowances...with the terms of the Scheme" by adding the outcome /purpose; and also in the next section on page 33 clarify that Community Engagement Forum is focus group.

A paper was also requested on the Community Engagement Forum and the results. P.35 Standing orders, amend to reflect/explain wording consistent with the score (of 5).

CFO/DCS/
DR/SSPM

ACFO
CFO/DCS/
DR/SSPM

Page 36 Code of conduct: include by whom consideration will be given.

With reference to Member Development, the DCS advised that 2 of the 3 new members had attended the induction day. The ACFO offered to provide members with a debrief paper on the Members Day, and this was agreed.

With reference to Significant Governance Issues: Fraud (P 47) the DR advised that he planned to bring a report to the Committee for the 13 December 2012.

Resolved:

- a) that the report was reviewed by the Committee, and
- b) that, the proposed action plan as amended be agreed

146. FINAL ACCOUNTS 2011/12

The Chairman advised the Committee that with their agreement he was happy to sign the draft letter at appendix A.

Resolved:

that the letter from the Committee Chairman to the external auditors as agreed be signed by the Chairman.

147. APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS AND EXTERNAL AUDIT FEES

The Director of Resources introduced the item and advised that the Board of the Audit Commission had met as planned on the 26 July 2012 and confirmed the appointment of Ernst and Young for 5 years starting in October 2012. There was a possibility of a further 3 year extension.

It was confirmed that there was not a break clause in the first 5 years, and that it was a fixed fee. Members were concerned about the costs of the new auditors getting up to speed. The DR confirmed that they had little experience in the sector of the Fire Service; however, TUPE would apply for the field workers.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

148. PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEWS

The ACFO introduced the report which was brought in response to concerns raised at the Fire Authority on the 11 April 2012. He advised that the percentage of PDIs completed and reported through Scorecard was lower than recorded by HR. This had highlighted a problem between the IT systems for which a fix was being sought. However, priority for this would depend on the national user group. The Chairman asked that IT provide the Committee with a timeframe for resolution at the next meeting.

There would be factors to prevent a 100% PDI completion such as maternity leave, and people with under 6 months in post, but the target should be 100% of eligible employees.

The DCS advised Members that a timetable had been prepared by HR which synchronized the process for PDIs with the corporate planning cycle. This had been agreed by Corporate Management Team (CMT), and it was agreed this would be

ACFO
DR

DR

DCS

DCS

brought to the next Committee meeting on 12 September 2012.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That a report outlining the new timetable for PDIs be brought to the next meeting.

149. QUARTERLEY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Group Manager Performance Review (GMPR) introduced the report. He outlined the amber indicators on the score card, and with regard to sickness, advised that although increasing, the numbers were still relatively low. The Chairman asked that as low numbers could distort percentages, both the number and percentage be provided in future. Members also considered the risk associated with the Olympics. With reference to measuring staff motivation by a survey every 3 years, and also from Principal Officer station visits, it was commented that the recent pace of changes may not be reflected.

GMPR

The number of fire casualties has increased but is still only .008% of the population, and the use of MOSAIC software is enabling better targeting for home fire risk assessments. Call challenge has resulted in a 44% decrease in false alarms over 3 years.

The Chairman thanked the GMPR for a thorough and informative report.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

150. OPTIONS FOR THE 2012/13 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The ACFO tabled a paper which provided a schedule of audit recommendations from 2010/11 and 2011/12 and it was suggested that the Committee might select some to assess the actions. The paper also included the goals from the Corporate Plan and the views of members were sought on whether there were items they wished to select for a mid-term report.

The Chairman suggested that Members take it away to identify areas and suggested Members email him by the end of August, so that a composite proposal be drawn up. It was recognized that the new terms of reference would also inform this.

ACFO

Resolved:

- a) that Members identify areas for the work plan to the Chairman and
- b) that it be brought to the next meeting to agree a composite work plan for the year.

151. AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The DCS introduced the item and reprised Members of the changes that had been agreed at the Annual meeting of the Fire Authority. Some standards functions such as the code of conduct, member development and attendance now fell in the remit of this Committee. The Fire Authority agreed that all members should have input to the revision of the code of conduct and that this Committee should initiate the work. The Committee agreed two members - Chairman Cllr Iain McCracken and vice Chairman Cllr Alan Ward – to work with DCS, and that if one of them was absent, that Cllr Emma Webster would be substitute.

DCS

152. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 12 September 2012 at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.