

MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE



Held on Monday 6 June 2011

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

Those present: Councillor Mrs Diana Coad (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor John Lenton (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Alan Ward (Member, Fire Authority)

In Attendance: Conor Byrne (Senior Accountant)
Jay Hussein (Haines Watts) (*part meeting*)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Yasmeen Mehmood (Haines Watts) (*part meeting*)
Nicholas Oxborough (Group Manager, Performance Review)
Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
Graham West (Audit Commission) (*part meeting*)

In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor Iain McCracken, Councillor Alan Ward (Vice-Chairman) assumed the Chair.

83. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Iain McCracken (Member, Fire Authority) (*Chairman*) and Councillor Mohammed Rasib (Fire Authority Member).

84. 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.

85. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2010

Resolved:

- a) That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2010 be Approved for signing by the Chairman designate.

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

Resolved:

- a) That it be Noted that no matters had been properly referred to the Committee for decision.

87. EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2010/11

The Committee was advised of the External Audit Plan for 2010/11, and Graham West (Audit Commission) took the Committee through the presented report.

Action

In response to Councillor John Lenton who noted that the Statement of Accounts (2010/11) would not now be presented to the Fire Authority until its meeting on 28 September 2011, and that the draft Statement of Accounts would not be considered by the Committee until its meeting on 21 September 2011, the Authority Treasurer agreed to circulate the draft Accounts to Committee Members in advance of the next meeting. Councillor John Lenton accepted that the draft Accounts could be subject to further changes.

**Authority
Treasurer /
Senior
Accountant**

Resolved:

- a) That the proposed External Audit Plan be Accepted.

88. EXTERNAL AUDIT FEES 2011/12

The Committee was advised of the external Audit fees for 2011/12.

Resolved:

- a) That the proposed external Audit fees for 2011/12 be Agreed.

89. FINAL ACCOUNTS 2010/11 - COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN'S LETTER TO EXTERNAL AUDITORS

The Committee considered the Committee Chairman's letter to the External Auditors.

Resolved:

- a) That the final content of the Committee Chairman's letter to the External Auditors be Agreed.

90. DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2010/11

The Committee scrutinised both the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS), annexed to the presented report as an Appendix, prior to its submission to the Fire Authority together with the Statement of Accounts, and the proposed Action Plan for 2011/12 to address areas of weakness. Officers responded to Members' points of clarity, the salient points of discussion being:

- Councillor John Lenton asked that he be kept informed of the 3 projects currently being entered into with Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services.
- The Induction Pack and training needs for new Fire Authority Members were currently being developed, with further training and skill sessions for all Members being considered.
- To engage members of the public in Consultations, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer referred to the work of ORS (Opinion Research Services) to assist the Fire Authority in this engagement, which included random sampling of members of the public and the convening of public focus groups. Councillor Mrs Diana Coad expressed an interest in attending future Consultation focus group sessions, and the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) stated that all Members were very welcome to attend and that invitations could be extended to them.
- Referring to the Partnership for Common Sense, the Chairman designate alluded to the Fire Brigades Union communications to Members. In response to the Clerk and Monitoring Officer (CMO), the Committee felt that it would be prudent that the Member/Officer Protocol be reviewed.

**Principal
Officers**

ACFO

CMO

- The Chairman designate felt that the Investors in People Standard should be re-visited which, he noted, had not been prioritised due to capacity issues. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer agreed to take this to the Corporate Management Team for further consideration.
- In response to Councillor Mrs Diana Coad's reference to any material available with regard to statutory duties for rescue from floodwaters, the Committee **Supported** the Clerk and Monitoring Officer's suggestion that a presentation be given to a future meeting of the Fire Authority.

ACFO

**CMO / Area
Manager
(Response) /
Forward Plan**

Resolved:

- a) That the proposed Action Plan for 2011/12 to address areas of weakness be Agreed with no amendments.

91. INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

The Committee was provided with a summary of the outcome of internal audit activity during the last year with any matters of particular concern highlighted, and of an overall Assurance Opinion on the work undertaken. Jay Hussein and Yasmeen Mehmood (Haines Watts) took the Committee through the salient points within the presented report, and noted, in particular, the Overall Assurance opinion given.

Resolved:

- a) That the Report be Noted.

92. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2011/12

The Committee was informed of the Internal Audit Plan for 2011/12, and Jay Hussein (Haines Watts) took the Committee through the key points within the presented report.

The Committee **Supported** Councillor John Lenton's suggestion that a presentation be given to the Committee at a future meeting on the functions, performance and processes undertaken by the Procurement Department, to include how the work of the Contracts Officer since her appointment has assisted with the aforementioned areas.

ACFO
Future
Meeting
Agenda

Resolved:

- a) That the Internal Audit Plan for 2011/12 be Accepted.

Graham West retired from the meeting.

93. CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee was informed of the latest Capital Programme report that was last presented to the Strategic Asset Management Committee.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.

94. DRAFT AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY

The Committee considered the Chairman's draft Annual Committee report to the Fire Authority.

Resolved:

- a) That the Committee's Annual report be Recommended to the Fire Authority.

95. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee was provided with an overview of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's (RBFRS) quarterly performance.

The Group Manager (Performance) addressed Members' points of clarity.

In response to Councillor Mrs Diana Coad's particular concerns regarding fire safety issues in Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs), the Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that Officers were always willing to engage with minority groups to ensure that fire safety messages were delivered.

The Group Manager (Performance) made available the 5-year comparison data for fire casualties for Slough and West Berkshire Unitary Authorities (*copy available from the Committee Manager*).

Councillor Mrs Diana Coad conveyed her congratulations for the significant performance improvement realised in the time taken to attend Road Traffic Collisions since the introduction of the new mobilising policy.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.

Jay Hussein (Haines Watts) and Yasmeen Mehmood (Haines Watts) retired from the meeting.

96. SCRUTINY TRAINING FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Consideration was given to any future training needs of the Committee Members.

Resolved:

- a) That a training session on procurement and the understanding of procurement processes be undertaken for Committee Members at its next meeting, and that consideration be given to extending this training to all Fire Authority Members if deemed appropriate by the Committee.
- b) That scrutiny training for Committee Members be a Standing Agenda Item on all future Agendas to enable the Committee to consider its future training needs.

ACFO
Agenda
21.09.11

Standing
Agenda
Item

97. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee considered the date of its next meeting arranged for Wednesday 21 September 2011 at 6.30pm. The Committee noted that a number of the current Committee Members would be unable to attend this meeting date, and it was felt that it would be prudent for those Members appointed to the Committee on 29 June 2011 to agree whether the date should be re-scheduled. Members were reminded that Member Substitutes could be nominated.

Resolved:

- a) That the date of the next meeting be further considered by the appointed Committee Members at its meeting on 29 June 2011, and that the Clerk and Monitoring Officer (CMO) remind the Party Group Leaders to consider this at their respective Group Meetings prior to the full meeting of the Fire Authority on 29 June 2011.

CMO