

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



Held on Wednesday 14 March 2012

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

Those present: Councillor Ricky Duveen (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor John Lenton (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Iain McCracken, Chairman (Member, Fire Authority)

In Attendance: Conor Byrne (Senior Accountant)
Kate Handy (District Auditor, Audit Commission) (part of meeting)
Yasmeen Mahmood (Haines Watts) (part of meeting)
Nick Oxborough (Group Manager, Performance Review)
Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Carolyn Rowe (Committee Manager)
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
Graham West (Audit Manager, Audit Commission) (part of meeting)

Before the meeting began, following the Chairman's proposal, a minutes silence was held for Lynda Kenyon, Committee Manager who sadly died this week.

Action

120. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Diana Coad (Member, Fire Authority) and Councillor Alan Ward (Member, Fire Authority).

The chairman requested that following the sad death earlier this week of Lynda Kenyon, Committee Manager, the appreciation, thanks and kind thoughts of the Committee be formally recorded.

121. 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.

122. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2012 2011

Resolved:

- a) That, subject to the title of Bernadette Thompson being amended to Team Leader, the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2011 be approved for signing by the Chairman.

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

Resolved:

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

124. PROCUREMENT MANUAL AND CONTRACTS REGISTER - PRESENTATION

The Committee viewed the draft Procurement Manual and the Contracts Register as presented by the Asst Chief Fire Officer (ACFO). The manual is a new document, building on best practice from other Fire Authorities, which takes into account the imminent new standing orders.

The Contracts Register enables planning ahead for the renewal of contracts. In answer to a question from the Chairman, a SWOT analysis for existing contracts is being prepared.

Members were invited to provide any further comments to the ACFO electronically, as either emails or clear track changes, by mid April (Monday 16 April 2012).

Resolved:

- a) That the item be noted.

125. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The representative from Haines Watts, Yasmeen Mehmood, introduced the report, and advised the Committee that there were no matters of concern in the audits undertaken.

The 11/12 programme was on target for completion, with the final 3 audits underway. It was agreed that any high priority findings in these audits, should result in the full report being brought to the next committee. If there are no high priority findings, in liaison with the chairman, there would be an option to cherry pick full report/s to bring to the committee as required. A further progress report would be brought to the next meeting.

Authority
Treasurer/
ACFO

Resolved:

- a) That the internal audit report be Noted.
(Yasmeen Mehmood left the meeting)

126. EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Kate Handy, District Auditor, and Graham West, Audit Manager, were present for this item. Kate Handy outlined the report, and confirmed that there were no matters to bring back to the Audit and Performance Committee. Accordingly, as nothing extra is required, the 2011/12 fees would be as in the fee plan, and 8% below 2010/11.

Ernst & Young have won the contract to provide external audit services to this part of the country from November 2012. Indications are there will be an overall 40% reduction in fees from 2012/13 onwards. Contact is limited and only through the Audit Commission at present. A consultation day has been arranged by the Audit Commission with Ernst & Young on 3 May 2012.

The chairman asked that an invitation be made to Ernst & Young to visit and meet the Committee preferably ahead of taking over in November 2012, but if not, then as soon as practicable.

Authority
Treasurer/
ACFO

Resolved:

- a) That the External Audit Plan and Fees for 2011/12 be Agreed.
(Kate Handy and Graham West left the meeting)

127. FUEL CARDS

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer outlined the arrangements for the 56 fuel cards at Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBF&RS).

The odometer reading could be used to correlate some fuel usage. Measuring fuel use by an appliance whilst stationary at an emergency relies on recording pumping hours. However, during prolonged periods at an emergency, mobile "topping up" arrangements mean measurement per appliance is difficult.

Fuel storage for up to 6 months is based on the RBF&RS pattern of usage. Emergency service partners daily usage, should they access these stocks, is much greater.

The Committee were advised that a report to the 26 March 2012 Management Committee makes recommendations regarding private car use, and that reconciliation is monthly for station cards, and for the individual card owners subject to monthly submission of the information.

The chairman asked that further information be provided to the Committee on the breakdown of spend per card and which are station specific. It was agreed to provide information to the chairman, and accordingly, agree what further information is brought to the next Committee.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be noted, and
- b) that, with the prior agreement of the chairman, further information be brought to the next meeting of the Audit and Performance Committee ACFO

128. PROGRAMME FOR REPLACING EXPIRED 10 YEAR SMOKE ALARMS INSTALLED BY RBF&RS

The Committee was provided with a report on the strategy for replacing 10 year smoke alarms previously installed by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBF&RS) dwellings. This included the specific criteria used for replacement.

The original installation was done as part of a nationally funded promotion and at RBF&RS, up to six or seven thousand a year were provided without any criteria being applied.

After 10 years the alarms indicate replacement is required, and a specific risk based needs assessment is now used to evaluate if a replacement should be provided free of charge. Otherwise, the household is still supported through advice, and directed to information on the website. This work is included in the new (2012/13) corporate plan.

Members of the Committee considered the criteria and were advised that some high risk categories apparently not included (for example care homes, children's homes, or housing provision by housing associations), are covered by more direct, enforceable legislation.

The biggest risks are doors from flats onto communal staircases, properties which are in multi use, commercial or fast food premises.

Resolved:

- a) that the report be noted, and

- b) - that information be provided to members of the Committee when available and before the next meeting on:
- the individual cost
 - how many are being replaced and the annual cost
 - the timescale for this liability, and projected cost each year

ACFO

129 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Group Manager, Performance Review, introduced the report and first drew the Committee's attention to Appendix 1 and the reasons for the two amber areas. For procurement and use of resources a measure of cost per head affects the figure, and for representing diversity in the workforce, it is affected by the recruitment freeze. The performance measures are being revised.

The red indicator is the risk associated with non delivery of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

Appendix 2 was considered and members were advised that for Response Attendance Standards, the sharp increase in the purple line was measuring fires where there was a smoke alarm fitted. Fire containment in room of origin has improved slightly, and the assessment and recording of this – e.g. where smoke is escaping, affects this measure.

Appendix 3 shows improvement on sickness, and whilst there is still work to do, RBFRS have the recognized good practice measures in place. A pension age of 60 risks increased sickness in what is, a physically demanding job.

Prompted by the performance report, the chairman asked what the liability was for the Olympics, and whether payments were being sought or made. The ACFO confirmed that the Chief Fire Officer had advised the instruction to be that the responsibility remains, and there is no longer any prospect of additional resources.

In view of some of the changes to performance reporting and, from the 1 April 2012, the ACFO assuming a lead role in this area, it was agreed that the chairman and ACFO meet.

ACFO

Resolved:

- a) That the quarterly performance report be Noted.

130. PROGRESS ON HEALTH AND SAFETY OBJECTIVES 2010-2012 (FROM 1ST APRIL 2011 – 29TH FEBRUARY 2012)

The ACFO introduced the report on behalf of the Director for Human Resources. The Committee was informed that indicator 2.5 showing red had been investigated. It flags low numbers of reported near miss incidents, and a range of interventions to encourage reporting have been undertaken. These will continue, and it is considered the red flag is on this occasion perverse, and near misses are being reported.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be noted.

131. STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT

In addition to the report, the Authority Treasurer provided the Committee with an oral update on the most recent capital programme budget. This will be published in the Management Committee papers for 26 March 2012. An underspend is projected of over £1 million, with an actual underspend of £250,000. The remainder is set against specific delayed expenditure and will be carried forward into 2012/13, for example, for the light vehicle purchase. The Committee was advised that accruals were now done each year, and one would be done for Wokingham Fire Station.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.

132. DRAFT AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE'S 2011/12 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY

The Chairman asked members of the Committee if they had any comments on the draft report. It was agreed it would be appropriate to also reflect the feedback from both the internal and external auditors received.

Resolved:

- a) That the 2011/12 annual report as amended, be reported to meeting of the Fire Authority.

133. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- **Wednesday 30 May 2012 at 6.30pm** in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Future dates: (all at 6.30 pm in SCC the Strategic Command Centre HQ)

Monday 30 July 2012

Thursday 13 September 2012

Monday 17 December 2012

Wednesday 13 March 2013

Wednesday 15 May 2013