

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

Held on Thursday 16 December 2010

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) (*part meeting*)
Councillor John Lenton (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound (Member, Fire Authority)
Alan Ward (Vice-Chairman / Member, Fire Authority)

In Attendance: Conor Byrne (Senior Accountant)
Steve Connors (Haines Watts) (*part meeting*)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Andy Mancey (Area Manager, Response)
Nick Oxborough (Group Manager, Performance Review)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)

In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor Alan Ward (Vice-Chairman) took the Chair for the meeting.

70. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the Chairman, Councillor Iain McCracken (Member, Fire Authority), and Councillor Mohammed Rasib (Fire Authority Member). Apologies were Noted from Councillor Mrs Diana Coad (Member, Fire Authority) who would be late to the meeting. Apologies were also received from Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer).

71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest 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.

72. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2010

Resolved:

- a) That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2010 be Approved for signing by the designate Chairman.

73. 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.

74. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER

The Committee received and considered the Audit Commission's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter for 2009/10.

Action

The Authority Treasurer conveyed the Audit Commission's apologies for being unable to attend this meeting, and, on behalf of the Audit Commission, he provided an overview of the Audit Commission's presented report.

The Authority Treasurer referred specifically to the findings of the Audit Commission's 2009/10 audit report into the Fire Authority's financial statements and the arrangements to achieve value for money in the Use of Resources, which had realised an unqualified opinion and unqualified value for money conclusion respectively. He also referred to the Recommendations within the report, and advised that the reference within the report to the anticipated additional £2million of savings required by 2011/12 (*paragraph 34*) was now expected to be £900k following the recent Government announcement of the settlement grant for the Authority. The Authority Treasurer noted that Recommendation 3 had already been addressed, and that, in fact, sufficient savings had been identified within Years 1 and 2. With regard to the Public Interest Disclosure, the Authority Treasurer assured Members that this matter had been fully investigated and that there was no foundation to the allegation.

Resolved:

- a) That the Audit Commission's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter for 2009/10 be Noted.

Councillor Mrs Diana Coad arrived at the meeting during the early considerations of the next item.

75. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee was advised of the progress with the internal Audit Plan for 2010/11.

Steve Connors (Haines Watts) took the Committee through the presented report, and he provided some examples of how the Recommendations might be addressed.

With regard to the Pensions Audit, the Senior Accountant advised that notification had now been received from Liberata regarding the overpayments made.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.

The Chairman conveyed his thanks to Steve Connors who then retired from the meeting during the consideration of the next item.

76. REVIEW OF CHANGES TO ACCOUNTING POLICIES REQUIRED UNDER INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING STANDARDS (IFRS)

The Committee was advised that the Fire Authority has a statutory duty to produce financial statements for 2010/11 that are compliant with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS); and that, as financial statements would no longer be produced under UK Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, changes to the Authority's current accounting policies would be required.

The Senior Accountant took Members through the presented report, and provided an explanation of the key accounting policy changes required under IFRS.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted;
- b) That the changes to the Authority's accounting policies as set out in the Appendix to the report (Key Accounting Policy Changes required under IFRS) be Approved.

77. ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE PERFORMANCE FOR ATTENDANCE TIMES TO DWELLING FIRES

Further to the Fire Authority Meeting held on 30 June 2010 at which a report had been presented detailing a considerable delay in the attendance of fire appliances to a dwelling fire incident, and at which the Committee's Chairman had requested a report on the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) performance for attendance times to dwelling fires, the Committee received a more detailed report on the aforementioned attendance times.

In response to Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound, the Group Manager (Performance Review) confirmed that more regular reports on achievement against targets or past performance would be provided at future meetings as part of the proposed changes in the future reporting of performance information to the Committee, if approved by the Committee at Agenda Item 10.

The Group Manager (Performance Review) provided the Committee with a list of average Fire Service response times, as copied from a Hansard entry following a question to the Fire Minister on 10 November 2010 seeking information on the average response times for the latest period that figures were available (*copy available from the Committee Manager*).

The Area Manager (Response) reassured Members that an investigation was always conducted when the 8 minute first response standard had not been met.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.

78. UPDATE ON THE NUMBER OF PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEWS UNDERTAKEN WITH UNIFORMED STAFF

Further to a presented report to the Committee at its meeting in May 2010 regarding performance on the completion of Performance Development Interviews (PDIs) within 12 months of the previous PDI, the Committee received a further report that reviewed the performance of the PDIs undertaken for uniformed staff.

The Area Manager (Response) referred the Committee to the latest data now available, as at 30 November 2010, and he was pleased to confirm that this data showed that the number of PDIs undertaken with uniformed staff had significantly improved. He assured Members that these Interviews were now mandated across the Service on an annual basis. The Area Manager (Response) stated that the available data to support the number of Interviews conducted at any one specific timeframe was often distorted due to the accounting and reporting system in place.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.

At the request of the Group Manager (Performance Review), the Chairman agreed to take Agenda Item 11 (Quarterly Performance Report next.

79. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee was provided with an overview of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's quarterly performance, this being the last time that the 3 Best Value Scorecards for 'Brigade Operations', 'General Health' and 'Local Performance Indicators' would be used for reporting performance.

Referring to attendance times at Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs), the Area Manager (Response) was pleased to report that, following a previous decline in performance, the implementation of changes to the mobilisation of appliances was now realising a significant improvement, particularly over recent months.

Resolved:

- a) That it be Noted that the performance reporting using the Scorecards was no longer required.

80. NEW PERFORMANCE MONITORING SYSTEM

The Committee was provided with an overview of the new performance monitoring system and of the new quarterly performance reporting framework which was proposed to replace the existing quarterly performance reports based on the 3 Scorecards; and consideration was given to the proposed changes in the future reporting of performance information to the Committee.

In response to Members' concerns, the Group Manager (Performance Review) confirmed that those indicators which were reporting as 'red' would always be examined in detail.

Resolved:

- a) That the proposed changes to the reporting procedure be Approved.

81. COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME

To Committee considered its Work Programme for the remainder of 2010/11, and no specific areas of work were identified at the current time.

82. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Thursday 17 March 2011 at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor Alan Ward conveyed his apologies for this meeting.