

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



Held on Tuesday 21 September 2010

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

Those present: Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons (*Substitute Member for Councillor Alan Ward / Member, Fire Authority*)
Councillor John Lenton (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Mohammed Rasib (Fire Authority Member)
Councillor Raja Zarait (Member, Fire Authority).

In Attendance: Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)
Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (Chairman, Fire Authority)
Conor Byrne (Senior Accountant)
Eduardo Cardoso (Station Manager, Performance Review)
Steve Connors (Haines Watts) (*part meeting*)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Andy Mancey (Area Manager, Response)
Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
Adam Swayne (Audit Commission) (*part meeting*)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
Graham West (Audit Commission) (*part meeting*)

Action

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the Clerk and Monitoring Officer invited those Members present to choose a Member to preside as Chair for the meeting. Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons offered to take the Chair, and, as no other Member indicated they were also willing to serve, she assumed the Chairmanship of the meeting with the unanimous agreement of those Committee Members present.

Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons in the Chair.

58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs Diana Coad (Member, Fire Authority), Councillor Iain McCracken (Chairman / Member, Fire Authority), Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound (Member, Fire Authority), and Councillor Alan Ward (Vice-Chairman / Member, Fire Authority).

59. 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.

60. MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 MAY 2010

Resolved:

- a) That the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Performance Review

Committee meeting held on 24 May 2010 be Approved for signing by the Chairman.

61. MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30 JUNE 2010

Resolved:

- a) That the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Performance Review Committee meeting held on 30 June 2010 be Approved for signing by the Chairman.

62. 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.

63. EXTERNAL AUDIT - 2009/10 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT

The Committee was advised of the Audit Commission's Governance Report in respect of the 2009/10 Audit (*copy available from the Committee Manager*), and the Committee considered the matters raised in the report.

Graham West provided an overview of the findings from the 2009/10 Audit which was substantially complete, and the key issues arising from the Audit of the Financial Statements and Value for Money.

Graham West advised the Committee of an amendment to the draft Letter of Representation, and tabled a copy of the amended draft Letter of Representation (*copy available from the Committee Manager*), the amendment being to the first paragraph entitled "Post Balance Sheet Events" which should now read "Since the date of approval of the financial statements by the Authority a change has been announced regarding the future indexing of pension increases, the effect of which has been disclosed in Note 10.20 as a non-adjusting post balance sheet event. No additional significant events have occurred which would require additional adjustment or disclosure in the financial statements".

Graham West referred to the work conducted by the Brigade's Financial Department which had realised no issues of concern in respect to the accounts. Councillor John Lenton conveyed his congratulations to the Officers concerned, and the Committee concurred with this.

Resolved:

- a) That the External Audit - 2009/10 Annual Governance Report be Noted.
- b) That the financial statements be approved, as referred to at Pages 4-9 of the presented Governance Report.
- c) That the Letter of Representation be approved, as amended, to enable the District Auditor to issue his opinion and conclusion, as referred to in Appendix 2 of the presented Governance Report.

The Chairman conveyed her thanks to Graham West and Adam Swayne, and they retired from the meeting.

64. 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 referred specifically to the Pensions Audit, the salient conclusion being that no evidence of over payments had been found. He also referred to the Business Critical Contracts Audit, which had included consideration of procurement and the award of contracts, and which had found that considerable work was being undertaken to update the procurement procedures and to compile a database of those contracts in place. Steve Connors' salient observation was that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service might wish to consider its future monitoring of contracts, however this recommendation would be included within a future report to the Committee.

In response to the Chairman, the Authority Treasurer confirmed that further investigative work was still ongoing in respect to a previous pension overpayment, and that a report would be presented to the Committee in due course.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.

The Chairman conveyed her thanks to Steve Connors and he retired from the meeting.

65. STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CAPITAL MONITORING REPORTS

The Committee viewed and considered the Capital Monitoring reports, including the 2009/10 and 2010/11 Capital Programme, as previously presented to the Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAMC) in April 2010 and July 2010.

Councillor Dr Paul Bryant felt that the reference within the 2010/11 Capital Programme to the "Extension to Wokingham Stn" should be re-worded to read "Rebuild of Wokingham Stn". The Assistant Chief Fire Officer reported that the tender award process was currently being progressed with regard to the Wokingham Fire Station re-build, and he was confident that the project would be delivered within budget.

In response to Councillor John Lenton, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that there was no slippage to the 2010/11 Capital Programme to May 2010, however due to recent issues identified in relation to the procurement of fire engines and water tenders and respective capabilities, the capital costs could now be in the region of £450k against a budget of £391k. The Chairman noted that some capital projects were coming in under budget which she was hopeful would off-set the aforementioned increase.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.

66. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee was provided with an overview of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's quarterly performance against a strategic performance measure, namely "% of Those Making a Complaint Satisfied with Handling of Complaint", and was advised of changes to the performance monitoring system with the introduction of the Core Strategy and new performance measures that are linked to the Strategic Commitments.

In response to Members' questions, Officers confirmed that:

- Nine complaints had been received to date during the 2010/11 period, and that no appeals had been received.
- The Brigade's Local Performance Indicators (LPIs) may not be replicated across other Fire and Rescue Services as these related to the management of the Service, however Best Value Scorecards could be benchmarked against other Fire and Rescue Services. Councillor Dr Paul Bryant asked that Officers give consideration to whether benchmarking might prove an effective tool, as he felt that the Regional Management Board might also wish to have a view on this.
- An investigation was always instigated in respect to any complaints received that referred to driving incidents or to employee conduct and professionalism, and that any such issues were treated very seriously.

The Committee was also provided with Best Value Scorecards for 'Brigade Operations', 'General Health' and 'Local Performance Indicators', however it became apparent that the presented report contained erroneous data, and it was **Agreed** that this should be corrected, re-circulated to the Members and re-considered at the next meeting.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.

67. COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME

Resolved:

- a) That the Committee's Work Programme be deferred to the next meeting for consideration.

The Chairman advised that the Audit and Performance Review Committee's Chairman, Councillor Iain McCracken, had agreed to take an additional item on the Agenda, namely the "Failure to meet first appliance attendance standard - Incident no: 4060, Grenfell Road, Maidenhead - 27 July 2010".

68. FAILURE TO MEET FIRST APPLIANCE ATTENDANCE STANDARD - INCIDENT NO: 4060, GRENFELL ROAD, MAIDENHEAD - 27 JULY 2010

The Committee was advised of an incident on 27 July 2010 in Grenfell Road, Maidenhead to which the Authority's attendance standard for the first appliance was not met due to a sequence of errors.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer tabled a supporting report (*copy available from the Committee Manager*) and he took the Committee through the details of the report.

Group
Manager
(Performance)

DCFO / CMO /
Group
Manager
(Performance)
Agenda
16.12.10

CMO
Agenda
16.12.10

In response to Councillor John Lenton who was concerned that the Brigade did not instantly know the location of its fire appliances, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer reminded the Committee that the installation of tracking devices on such appliances had been delayed as a result of the delay in the national Radio and FiReControl projects. He reported that, at the current time, the cutover dates to the Regional Control Centre were still not definitive, and that the Brigade was currently exploring options for the outsourcing of its Control to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor John Lenton referred to a series of questions previously raised by Councillor Kathy Newbound with regard to this incident. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer stated that the presented report had also been included on the forthcoming Agenda for the Fire Authority's meeting on 29 September 2010, and that Members would be welcome to put any questions to Officers at that meeting.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reassured the Committee that such incidents were extremely rare; and that a full investigation had been conducted into this incident which had subsequently resulted in the reinforcement of existing policies and procedures, and supplemented with a new policy regarding the booking of non operational activities which should prevent this from happening again.

Due consideration was given to when it should be deemed appropriate and/or necessary to inform Fire Authority Members of incidents that were due to organisational failure or those incidents that could realise public relations interest.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.
- b) That all Fire Authority Members should be advised immediately, or as soon as was practicable, of any incident that related to organisational failure or where there might be a public relations interest.

The Chairman conveyed her thanks to the Officers for conducting a thorough investigation into this incident.

69. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Thursday 16 December 2010 at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.