

Review of Committee Terms of Reference

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact John Redmond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260203 or Sharon Lloyd, Corporate Support Manager, on 01743 260210.

1 Purpose of Report

This report asks Members to review the current Terms of Reference of the Audit and Performance Management Committee and make recommendations regarding any amendments required to the Fire Authority.

2 Recommendations

The Audit and Performance Management Committee is asked to review its Terms of Reference and make recommendations regarding any amendments required to the Fire Authority.

3 Background

The Audit and Performance Management Committee reviews its Terms of Reference annually and this action is included in the Committee's Work Plan for June 2014.

In 2013 (after the Committee had carried out its annual review of its Terms of Reference) the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) published new guidance, 'Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2013)'. The current Terms of Reference have, therefore, been reviewed and rewritten in line with this latest guidance.

4 Review of Terms of Reference

Whilst carrying out their review officers took the opportunity to insert a number of sub-headings, which mirror, to some extent the CIPFA guidance, and also show more clearly the various areas covered by the Committee.

The draft Terms of Reference are set out in the appendix to this report. Deletions are shown struck through and additions in bold italics. The majority of the amendments have been made to reflect the CIPFA guidance. The exception to this is monitoring performance of the Fire Authority controlled company, Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Limited.

The Committee's views are sought on the proposed amendments and also as to whether it wishes to recommend any other changes to the Fire Authority.

5 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report. There may, however, be financial implications associated with some of the responsibilities listed within the Committee's Terms of Reference, for which individual reports will be brought to the Committee as necessary, detailing those specific implications.

6 Legal Comment

Any proposed changes to the Committee's terms of reference must be approved at a meeting of the full Fire Authority.

7 Initial Impact Assessment

This report merely proposes changes to the constitutional framework within which the Audit and Performance Management Committee functions, in line with guidance provided by CIPFA. An Initial Impact Assessment is not, therefore, required.

8 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Human Resources 5 Part 2) and have decided that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment is not, therefore, required.

9 Appendix

Audit and Performance Management Committee
Draft Terms of Reference

10 Background Papers

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)
Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2013)

Audit and Performance Management Committee

Quorum - 4

Chair

The Chair of the Committee shall be elected from a member of the largest opposition group.

Members - 7

Peter Adams (Conservative)
Martin Bennett (Conservative)
Frances Bould (Labour)
John Hurst-Knight (Conservative)
Jean Jones (Labour)
Terry Kiernan (Conservative)
Chris Mellings (Liberal Democrat)

Members of the Fire Authority's Strategy and Resources Committee are precluded from sitting on the Audit and Performance Management Committee and vice versa.

Meeting Dates

2014

27 March
12 June
11 September
6 November

Members may request a meeting with Internal and External Audit without Fire Service officers present.

All meetings take place at 2.00 pm at Service Headquarters, unless otherwise advised.

Statement of Purpose

Audit*

To provide an independent and high-level resource to support good governance and strong public financial management

To provide those charged with governance independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of financial reporting and annual governance processes.

~~To provide “an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation’s operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.”~~

~~* As defined in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), produced by The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in association with The Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors (CIIA)~~

Performance Management

To oversee the process of assessing progress toward achieving the Fire Authority’s predetermined aims, as set out in the Service Plan. The Committee’s role involves building on that process, adding the relevant communication and action on the progress achieved against the predetermined aims.

Audit Core Functions*

To be satisfied that the Fire Authority’s assurance statements, including the Annual Governance Statement, properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it, and demonstrate how governance supports the achievement of the Fire Authority’s objectives

In relation to the Fire Authority’s internal audit functions:

- ***To oversee its independence, objectivity, performance and professionalism***
- ***To support the effectiveness of the internal audit process***
- ***To promote the effective use of internal audit within the assurance framework***

To consider the effectiveness of the Fire Authority’s risk management arrangements and the control environment. To review the risk profile of the organisation and assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues, including partnerships with other organisations

To monitor the effectiveness of the control environment, including arrangements for ensuring value for money and for managing the Fire Authority’s exposure to the risks of fraud and corruption

***To consider the reports and recommendations of external audit and inspection agencies and their implications for governance, risk management or control
To support effective relationships between external audit and internal audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and encourage the active promotion of the value of the audit process***

To review the financial statements, external auditor's opinion and reports to Members, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by external audit

**** As defined in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2013)***

~~As recommended in The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy publication 'Audit Committees Practical Guidance for Local Authorities'~~

Terms of Reference

In order to carry out its purpose and core functions the Committee will consider, monitor, review and, as appropriate, approve the following documents:

Governance, Risk Management and Internal Control

- Code of Corporate Governance
- Annual Governance Statement
- ***Report on the effective development and operation of risk management***
- Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy
- Brigade Order on Reporting of Illegality and Malpractice (Whistleblowing)
- Committee Terms of Reference and, where changes are required, make recommendations accordingly to the Fire Authority
- Annual Work Plan
- Role Descriptions of Committee Chair and Vice-Chair and Risk Management and Audit Champion

Internal Audit

- Any proposals for the revision of the Service Level Agreement with Internal Audit
- The Annual Audit Plan
- Revisions to the annual audit plan, as advised by the Head of Internal Audit and agreed by the Treasurer

- The Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report and opinion on the work completed by Internal Audit and the progress made in implementing recommended actions, including progress made against any improvement plans
- Half-yearly reports from the Risk Management Group on the work completed by Internal Audit and the progress made in implementing recommended actions
- Reports on Internal Audit special investigations, including frauds, and consideration of recommendations for strengthening internal controls

External Audit

- The External Auditor's Work Plan, including comments on the scope and depth of external audit work, considering whether it gives value for money
- The Annual Audit Letter
- Reports on external audit assessment frameworks, in order to maintain an awareness of the most current regimes

Financial Reporting

- The Fire Authority's draft Statement of Accounts for review, challenge and approval (as per authority delegated by the Fire Authority on 13 February 2012)
- The audit findings report, based on 'International Standard on Auditing (ISA) 260' of the External Auditor to those charged with governance, which includes the Value for Money Conclusion. The Chair of the Committee will sign the Letter of Representation annually on behalf of those charged with governance

Performance Monitoring

- Monitoring reports on implementation of Service Plan Aims and Public Value Measures
- Exception reports on Directorate objectives, where they lead to a failure in a Public Value Measure
- Annual Report on the **Service's** previous year's performance prior to submission to the Fire Authority
- Monitoring reports on the implementation of Best Value Reviews
- Customer relation issues and monitoring reports on complaints and compliments
- ***Monitoring reports on the performance of the Fire Authority controlled company, Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Limited***

Miscellaneous

The Committee will oversee and scrutinise Treasury Management and make recommendations, where appropriate, to the Fire Authority.

The Committee will consider, investigate (where appropriate), and report upon, any other matter within its remit, referred to it by the Fire Authority, the Chief Fire Officer, the Treasurer or the Monitoring Officer.

The Committee will ensure the provision of appropriate training and development to ensure that all of its Members are able to discharge their responsibilities

Powers

The Audit and Performance Management Committee will:

- Have no delegated powers but can require relevant officers to attend any meeting, where such attendance would be expedient to the work of the Committee
- Have the power to meet privately and separately with the Head of Internal Audit and / or with the External Auditor, independent of the presence of those officers with whom the auditors must retain a working relationship