

**Non-Exempt Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Audit and Performance Management Committee
held at Headquarters, Shrewsbury
on Thursday, 26 November 2009 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Councillors Mrs Greenaway (Vice-Chair), Dr Jones (Chair), Kiernan, Mason, Mellings and Price

Officers

Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer, Head of Risk Management, District Officer South, Programme Manager, Information Officer, Equality and Diversity Officer, Corporate Services Manager, Management Support Officer,
Mr Corcoran, District Auditor from the Audit Commission

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Adams.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Performance Management Committee, held on 10 September 2009.

It was proposed by Councillor Mellings, seconded by Councillor Mason and

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Performance Management Committee, held on 10 September 2009, be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record

4 Public Questions

No public questions, statements or petitions had been received.

The Chair reported that since the papers had been sent out the Audit Commission had advised that agenda items 6a, the Annual Audit Letter, and 6b, Use of Resources, were embargoed. The Chair, therefore, stated that she intended to vary the order of the agenda so that items 6a, 6b, and 15 would be considered in closed session, after item 4.

For ease of reference these minutes retain the original agenda item numbers.

14 Local Government Act 1972

It was proposed by Councillor Price, seconded by Councillor Greenaway and

Resolved that, under the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of information, which had been embargoed on the direction of a Government Minister

6a Annual Audit Letter of the Audit Commission

Mr Corcoran presented the Annual Audit Letter to the meeting.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the Annual Audit Letter

6b Use of Resources – Report of the Audit Commission

Mr Corcoran presented the Use of Resources report to the meeting.

He informed the Committee that this was his last meeting as External Auditor for the Fire Authority, as, in accordance with Audit Commission rotation policy, he would be moving to another area. The Chair thanked Mr Corcoran for all his work over the past 10 years auditing Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report

15 Comprehensive Area Assessment 2009 Results (Embargoed)

This report informed Members of the recently issued results arising from the 2009 Comprehensive Area Assessment regime.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report

Mr Corcoran left at this point (2.20 pm) and the meeting reverted to open session.

5 Role Descriptions

This report sought to establish Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit and Performance Management Committee, and asked the Committee to review the existing Role Description for Member Champion for Risk Management and Audit.

The Chair emphasised how important it was to be able to participate in the Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group to develop her understanding of the position of Chair of the Committee. Councillor Mellings felt the revised Role Descriptions were fit for purpose.

It was proposed by Councillor Price, seconded by Councillor Kiernan and

Resolved that the Fire Authority be recommended to agree:

- a) The Role Description for the Chair of the Audit and Performance Management Committee;
- b) The Role Description for the Vice-Chair of the Audit and Performance Management Committee; and
- c) The Role Description for the Member Champion for Risk Management and Audit

7 Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2009/10

This report summarised the progress made to date against the improvements contained in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) Improvement Plan 2009/10.

The Head of Risk Management confirmed that to achieve the target for asset management more resources would be required. Policy Group had confirmed that a member of staff would be used to achieve the target of March 2010.

Councillor Greenaway asked if number 6 on the appendix had now been completed. The Head of Risk Management confirmed that a new IT system was in place to back up all work completed at Shrewsbury as part of business continuity planning.

Resolved that the Committee note the progress made against each of the improvements contained in the AGS Improvement Plan 2009/10

8 Risk Management Group – Internal Audit Progress Monitoring Report

This report provided Members with an update on the monitoring of recommendations made by Internal Audit. It gave specific details about the progress made against outstanding recommendations.

The Head of Risk Management brought the Committee's attention to page 2 of the appendix. He explained that recommendation 3: Personnel 2005/06 had been misinterpreted since its initial proposal, and had subsequently caused confusion as to how it should be rectified. Following the recent audit of Risk Management the Head of Risk Management had agreed with the auditors that this recommendation would be superseded by a new recommendation in the Risk Management Audit Report.

It was noted that the Head of Resources had been requested to attend the next Risk Management Group meeting in order to move forward recommendations 1, 2 and 3 on page 3

Councillor Price asked for more information on recommendation 4: Miscellaneous 2006/07. The Head of Risk Management explained that, as there had been very few funds going through the social club, the accounts had not been fully maintained. The Finance Department was now aware of the issue and was dealing with it accordingly.

Councillor Mellings thanked the Head of Risk Management for the update, and commented it was good to see implementation of the recommendations.

Resolved that the Committee:

- a) Note the progress that had been made against the outstanding recommendations; and
- b) Note that the Risk Management Group will continue to monitor progress against all recommendations, reporting progress to the Committee on a regular basis

9 Performance and Financial Benchmarking

This report demonstrated the position for the finance function, should the Service take part in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and KPMG Support Services Benchmarking exercise.

The Treasurer explained that it was important for the Authority to understand how back office services work. He emphasised it was important to achieve a balance between money spent and what you get out of the benchmarking service, which may be more suited for larger authorities. On balance, he advised the Committee not to join the benchmarking service.

The Treasurer felt it was useful for Managers to find out what is being asked of them by their customers. There is no detailed output costing and it is beneficial to gather as much information as possible, as the finance function should be scrutinised.

The Chair felt it was useful to collaborate with other services. Councillor Mason raised the issue of the use of resources to gather information. The Treasurer confirmed that more resources would be required to gather information but it may have a benefit to the Authority.

It was proposed by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Price and

Resolved that the Committee ask Managers to undertake the work they consider essential to an understanding of the effectiveness and value for money of their Service

10a Performance Assessment Key Performance Indicators 2009/10

This report informed Members of the score, which would be attributed to this Authority for the Key Performance Indicator element of the performance assessment 2009/10 based on current performance, if assessed.

The Information Officer suggested to Members that reports 10a and 10b be amalgamated, as the information in 10a was also contained within 10b. Members agreed with this request.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report, and monitor action plans necessary on failing or high risk indicators

10b Performance against Best Value Performance Indicators April 2009 to September 2009

This report informed Members of the Brigade's performance against nationally prescribed Best Value Performance Indicators for the period 1 April 2009 to 30 September 2009.

The Information Officer gave a brief overview of the appendices to the report, which were then discussed in detail, and the following significant issues were highlighted:

Appendix A

BVPI 12 (i)

The target is failing due to seasonal colds and coughs. Swine flu cannot be pinpointed as the problem.

BVPI 12 (ii)

There is a large reduction in non-uniformed sick days.

BVPI 16 and BVPI 17

This information still depends on staff declarations and volunteering information. The statistics regarding Ethnic Minority remain static. There may be a change in numbers following a new intake of recruits to the Service.

BVPI 210

There is at least 1 new female firefighter within the new intake of recruits, which will affect numbers.

BVPI 206 (iii) and BVPI 206 (iv)

The number of incidents had reduced and is closer to the target set. The figures were expected to increase around the bonfire period of November but initial research show figures are quiet for this time of year.

BVPI 209 (iii)

This target usually fails but is now improving.

BVPI 143 (i)

There were no accidental dwelling fires, which was good for the quarter.

BV149 (ii)

Officers are unable to gather statistics with the new system.

Appendix B

No data has been gathered. Targets are now set for 2013, and have been agreed by CLG for the New Human Resources System.

Appendix D

The prediction is for success in all 3 categories or an improvement from last year's figures. 1 incident can have a significant impact on results.

Appendix E

Figures for secondary arson are reducing towards the target set.

Appendix F

The purchase of optical smoke detectors will improve the Service's carbon footprint.

Appendix G

More in-depth analysis shows the majority of accidents relate to new recruits training at the Training Centre.

Appendix H

The definition has been changed by the Department for Communities and Local Government, resulting in the data being erratic.

Appendix I

All dates have been met for Key Financial Indicators.

The Committee thanked the Information Officer for the statistics provided.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report

10c Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring July 2009 to September 2009

This report provided information regarding the ongoing performance of the Retained Duty System (RDS) in Shropshire.

Referring to graph C, the District Officer South explained that the 1 person missing has a significant impact on the results.

He brought the Committee's attention to page 5 of the report and advised that the establishment is down, because 10 members of staff have left the Service and only 5 joined.

Councillor Mason asked why the number of home safety visits and smoke detectors fitted is down. The District Officer South explained that this was because Fire Service staff are refused entry to homes for a variety of reasons but they are working with other agencies to increase the number of home safety visits and smoke detectors fitted.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report

11 Summary of Progress within the Improvement Priorities for 2009/10

The purpose of this report was to demonstrate to Members progress on the Fire Authority's Improvement Priorities for 2009/10.

The Programme Manager gave the Committee a brief overview of the appendix to the report and advised that, under improving competence, the capability policy has been considered by the Representative Bodies and will be taken to the Human Resources Committee in January for further consideration.

Under the improving capacity work stream, a report on the Regional Control Centre will be taken to the Fire Authority meeting in December

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report

The Chair adjourned the meeting for a few minutes to enable the Equality and Diversity Officer to be called. The meeting was then reconvened.

12a Progress on the Corporate Equality Action Plan

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the progress of the actions identified within the Corporate Equality Action Plan (CEAP), which are being monitored through the Directorate Business Plans.

The Equality and Diversity Officer informed the Committee that there were still 14 actions in the appendix, which are incomplete and these will, therefore, be included in the Single Equality Scheme.

It was proposed by Councillor Price, seconded by Councillor Kiernan and

Resolved that the Committee:

- a) Note the progress on the actions in the CEAP; and

- b) Agree that the CEAP should continue to be used to monitor Equality and Diversity progress until the introduction of the Single Equality Scheme

12b Equality and Diversity Steering Group Summary Report

The purpose of this report was to provide the Committee with a summary report on the work of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group.

The Equality and Diversity Officer explained that the Steering Group was moving more towards community focus and balancing organisational needs. They are continually monitoring feedback from other agencies, and other equality and diversity groups.

It as noted that a request has been approved for funding to join the Asian Fire Service Association.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report

The Equality and Diversity Officer left the meeting at this point (3.45 pm).

13 Member Training Update

This report updated Members on training issues.

The Treasurer gave a brief overview of the appendix and a discussion took place between Members regarding a suitable time and location for a training session on Treasury Management. It was decided by Members that the training should take place in the New Year.

Councillor Mason suggested that further training should take place prior to Fire Authority meetings to give all Members of the Fire Authority the chance to participate

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer suggested that a seminar on 'performance management' be scheduled prior to the next Fire Authority meeting in December; which was agreed by the Committee.

Resolved that a seminar on performance management be delivered prior to the Fire Authority meeting in December and that a seminar on Treasury Management take place in the New Year

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....