

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of the SCRUTINY & AUDIT PANEL held at East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, 20 Upperton Road, Eastbourne, at 10:00 hours on Thursday 18 September 2014.

Members Present: Councillors Buchanan, Carden, Deane, Galley, Lambert (Chair), Peltzer Dunn and Taylor.

Also present: Councillor Barnes.

Also present:

Mr. D Prichard (Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive), Mrs. C. Rolph (Assistant Chief Officer), Ms. L. Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mr. D. Savage (Treasurer), Mr. W. Tricker (Head of Procurement & Finance), Mrs. L. Ridley (Head of Performance Management), Mr. J. Salmon (Estates Manager), Mr. P. King (Ernst & Young Auditors), Mr. I. Young (Ernst & Young Auditors), Mr. K. McGrath (Ernst & Young Auditors), Mr. R. Sutton (Business Services ESCC), and Mrs. S. Klein (Clerk).

916. **DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

916.1 It was noted that, in relation to matters on the agenda, no participating Member had any disclosable pecuniary interest under Section 30 of the Localism Act 2011.

917. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

917.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Wincott and Members joined the Chair in sending him their good wishes for his recovery. Apologies for absence were also received from Mr. Walsh and Mr. Ferrand.

918. **ANY OTHER NON-EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR/ CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

918.1 There were no urgent items for consideration.

918.2 The Chair informed Members of ACFO Ferrand's national award given by the Chief Fire Officers' Association for his work on protection, prevention and road safety – this was wonderful recognition for both ACFO Ferrand and ESFRS as a whole and Members passed on their congratulations.

918.3 The Chair welcomed Paul King, Ian Young and Kris McGrath from Ernst & Young, the Fire Authority's external auditors, and Ross Sutton, from Business Services, ESCC, to the meeting.

918.4 Councillor Barnes was also welcomed to the meeting, to present the Annual Outturn Report on Environmental issues, supported by Julian Salmon, Estates Manager.

919. **NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE LAST SCRUTINY AND AUDIT PANEL MEETING HELD ON 11 JULY 2014**

919.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel held on 11 July 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. (Copy in Minute Book).

920. **CALLOVER**

920.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

921. 2013/14 External Auditor's Audit Report and Statement of Accounts

923. 2013/14 Environmental Issues – Annual Outturn

924. 2013/14 Fatal Accidental Fire Review

920.2 **RESOLVED** – That all other reports be resolved in accordance with the recommendations as detailed below.

921. **2013/14 EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S AUDIT REPORT AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

921.1 Members considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and the Treasurer that presented the External Auditor's Results (ISA 260) and reported an unqualified opinion on the Authority's 2013/14 Statement of Accounts. (Copy in Minute Book).

921.2 The Chair welcomed the Auditors to the meeting and Paul King introduced his colleagues, Ian Young and Kris McGrath. Mr. King confirmed that the replacement pages 10 and 11 of the Statement of Accounts would be signed and dated when the Accounts are issued and reported on behalf of the Fire Authority.

921.3 Mr. King talked through the Audit Results Report ISA 260 and confirmed that the Auditors were able to issue an unqualified opinion on the financial statements, with very few matters to communicate, and that the Authority had prepared its financial statements adequately.

921.4 The previously identified issue from 2012/13, reported in confidential session, had been considered, and Mr. King also confirmed that all areas of the work programme had been completed. The Whole of Government Accounts work had also now been concluded and the appropriate submission made to the National Audit Office. The Chair thanked Mr. King and confirmed that she would be meeting with the Treasurer, Assistant Chief Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer following the meeting to discuss the recent CIPFA guidance and how this would benefit the future work of the Panel.

921.5 Mr. Savage explained that the submission of the Accounts and the related work was done in partnership with Business Services at ESCC, led by Ross Sutton, and he thanked him for his work.

- 921.6 Councillor Deane was pleased to receive an unqualified opinion on such a complex issue as the Statement of Accounts and the Chair echoed this.
- 921.7 The CFO&CE drew Members' attention to Criteria 2 of the arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness which stated that the changes agreed by the Fire Authority under the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) must be implemented in order to reduce the funding gap from £7.1m to £1.7m by 2019/20. This also included the establishment of the Service Transformation Team, as approved by the Fire Authority on 11 September 2014. The CFO&CE reminded Members that these had not been unanimously agreed by the Fire Authority and that, by continuing to lobby for the changes to be overturned, some Members and representative bodies were sending the message to staff that the Fire Authority was not committed to delivering the MTFP.
- 921.8 Councillor Peltzer Dunn was one who had voted against the cuts in the MTFP but explained that he was not lobbying to have these overturned – the decision had been arrived at democratically and he accepted that decision.
- 921.9 Councillor Galley congratulated the Treasurer and his team on their achievements but felt that, with an underspend on the budget and an increase in Reserves to almost £14m (against a revenue budget of £38m) there were no grounds for the public to pay an increase in their council tax. He felt that the Fire Authority is a politically divided body, with some Members having different views and visions, but the majority understood that the savings had to be made; incidents attended in the previous year had gone down and the case for reforms was rock solid.
- 921.10 **RESOLVED** – That
- (i) the External Auditor's Audit Report (ISA 260) be noted;
 - (ii) the Treasurer be authorised to sign the formal letter of representation to the External Auditor; and
 - (iii) the Statement of Accounts, as amended by the substitution of revised pages 10 and 11, be approved for publication.

922. **2013/14 REVIEW OF PROGRESS WITH PARTNERSHIPS**

- 922.1 Members had considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that advised them of the outcome of the review of partnerships completed for 2013/14 and other changes affecting partnerships. (Copy in Minute Book).

- 922.2 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

923. **2013/14 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES – ANNUAL OUTTURN**

- 923.1 Members considered a report presented by Councillor Barnes, the Member Lead for Service Support, which advised them of the activities to reduce energy consumption. (Copy in Minute Book).

- 923.2 The target to reduce CO2 emissions by 3.5% had been exceeded, along with subsequent cost reductions, and these were achieved relatively painlessly, e.g. by using 'grey' paper, and setting printers' defaults to double-sided printing. There were a few problem areas, e.g. with changes to ways of measuring, such as the Disposable Energy Certificate; and three Service sites – Eastbourne Fire Station, the Service Training Centre and Headquarters.
- 923.3 There were, however, success stories, such as the new fire station which had opened at Crowborough, making use of solar energy and LED lighting, and the new fire station which would be built at Newhaven. A lot of work was also being undertaken on light transport and the use of pool vehicles, and carbon reduction and achieving savings.
- 923.4 The Chair thanked Councillor Barnes for his input into this area and Councillor Barnes thanked ACFO Ferrand and Mr. Salmon for their work.
- 923.5 **RESOLVED** – That the outturn for 2013/14 and the related improvements since the last annual update be noted.

924. **2013/14 – FATAL ACCIDENTAL FIRE REVIEW**

- 924.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that set out details of the fatal accidental fires in East Sussex which had occurred during 2013/14. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 924.2 Councillor Galley asked the CFO&CE for a definition of 'vulnerable' people. Two people who were reported to have died while smoking were using oxygen. He also wanted to understand the role of the Service in healthy eating initiatives and targeting poor diet and obesity, which he felt was not a core activity of the Fire & Rescue Service. The CFO&CE explained that 'vulnerable' people included the more elderly, those with a lifetime limiting illness, those dependent on drink or drugs, single parents, the elderly living alone, and those living in houses of multiple occupation. A target had been agreed by the Fire Authority to make Home Safety Visits and fit smoke alarms in 10,000 homes each year – to ensure that the most vulnerable are reached, a target of 90% being vulnerable people was agreed, and this left some flexibility for other ad hoc but worthy requests, which might not fall within this definition; the definition of 'vulnerability' was under constant review. The CFO&CE also explained that obesity was costing the country a large amount and that this risk area was associated with accidental dwelling fires and a variety of health problems – as part of the Service's protection, prevention and response responsibilities, our volunteers were helping with initiatives to support health and well-being across local communities.
- 924.3 Councillor Deane was heartened to see the long term holistic approach being taken by ESFRS and the CFO&CE thanked Councillor Galley for raising a very relevant point – it was important that the Service does not try to do too much, and Members needed to hold him to account.

- 924.4 **RESOLVED** – That the report and the following be noted:
- (i) that all future fire deaths and fires involving serious injuries continue to be fully profiled to enable the better targeting of vulnerable individuals and groups; and
 - (ii) that the Community Risk Management Team continues to engage in partnership activity that reduces the risk to vulnerable people in the community.

925. **2013/14 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE**

- 925.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that presented the Statement of Operational Assurance for the Panel's approval. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 925.2 **RESOLVED** – That the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service's Statement of Operational Assurance be approved.

926. **2014/15 1ST QUARTER PERFORMANCE RESULTS**

- 926.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that presented the first quarter performance indicator results for 2014/15. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 926.2 **RESOLVED** – That
- (i) the 2014/15 performance results for Quarter 1 as set out in the report to the Panel and Appendix A to the report, be noted; and
 - (ii) the information included within the exceptions report set out in Appendix B be noted.

927. **2014/15 1ST QUARTER OUTTURN RESULTS – CORPORATE PROJECTS**

- 927.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that presented the 2014/15 first quarter outturn results on the corporate projects. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 927.2 **RESOLVED** – That the corporate progress made at the end of the first quarter 2014/15 within the content of the other work priorities be noted.

928. **2014/15 1ST QUARTER CORPORATE RISK REGISTER REVIEW**

- 928.1 Members considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and the Treasurer that set out the latest quarterly review of the corporate risk. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 928.2 **RESOLVED** – That the latest corporate risk register be approved.

929. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

929.1 **RESOLVED** – That items nos. 930, 931 and 932 be exempt under paragraphs 1, 3 and 7 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 and accordingly are not open for public inspection on the grounds that they include information relating to the matters indicated below:

Item 930 paragraphs 3 and 7 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), and information relating any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation and prosecution of crime.

Item 931 paragraphs 1 and 3 – information relating to an individual and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information),

Item 932 paragraph 3 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information),

The meeting concluded at 11:15 hours.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2014