

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 5 November 2015.

Members Present: Councillors Barnes, Buchanan, Lambert (Chair), Peltzer Dunn, Scott, Taylor and Wincott.

N.B. Councillor Barnes attended the meeting in place of Councillor Galley, and Councillor Scott attended in place of Councillor Penn, having been nominated by the Group Leaders and approved by the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

Also present:

Councillor Howson (Chairman East Sussex Fire Authority), Mr. G. Walsh (Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive), Mr. S. Apter (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), Mr. G. Ferrand, (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), Mrs. C. Rolph (Assistant Chief Officer), Ms. L. Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mr. D. Savage (Treasurer), Mr. W. Tricker (Head of Finance & Procurement), Mrs. L. Ridley (Head of Performance Management), Mr. P. King (Ernst & Young Auditors) and Mrs. S. Klein (Clerk).

991. **DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

991.1 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.

992. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

992.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Galley and Penn; Members sent their best wishes to Councillor Galley for a speedy recovery

993. **ANY OTHER ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR / CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

993.1 The Chair welcomed Steve Apter to his first meeting. Steve had been seconded from Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service as Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Members extended a warm welcome to him.

994. **NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY AND AUDIT PANEL MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2015**

994.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel held on 17 September 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. (Copy in Minute Book).

995. **CALLOVER**

995.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

996. Annual Audit Letter 2014/15

997. 2014/15 Service Benchmarking

998. 2015/16 2nd Quarter Performance Results

999. Corporate Projects and Programmes Quarter 2 Progress Report

003. IMD Transformation Programme Progress

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

996. **ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2014/15**

996.1 Members considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and Treasurer that presented the recently published Annual Audit letter 2014/15. (Copy in Minute Book).

996.2 Paul King, from the Authority's external auditors, Ernst & Young, was welcomed to the meeting. The Letter had recently been published, summarising the external auditors' work relating to 2014/15, the majority of which had already been reported to this Panel in the Audit Results Report for 2014/15.

996.3 The Chair asked Mr. King to clarify the newly added Section 4 of the Letter – Looking Ahead. Mr. King explained that the first point referred to payments to be made to individuals affected by the Pensions' Ombudsman's determination in the case of GAD v Milne; the Auditors were not anticipating any financial impact on the Fire Authority as any liabilities incurred were to be fully funded by top up grant from Central Government.

996.4 The Treasurer confirmed that he was continuing to provide information requested to DCLG and had an indicative cost in relation to ESFRS pensioners of £933k – he was waiting for DCLG to clarify whether payments would be compensation or pension payments, and the mechanism for repayments to be made to the Fire Authority.

996.5 Mr. King explained that the second part of Section 4 of the Letter gave details about the new timetable for the preparation, approval and publication of accounts from the 2017-18 financial year. This would mean that the Fire Authority would have to produce draft accounts by 31 May and these would need to be audited by 31 July. The Auditors were already working on ways to meet these logistical challenges, including doing more work before the end of the financial year, with less to do after the end of the year.

996.6 Mr. King reassured Members that the Fire Authority's financial position was sound, with proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources, and a structured and planned use of its reserves.

996.7 **RESOLVED** – That the recently published Annual Audit Letter be approved on behalf of the Fire Authority.

997. **2014/15 SERVICE BENCHMARKING**

- 997.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that presented Fire Statistics for 2014/15 and benchmarking information. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 997.2 The report provided the results of an Annual Benchmarking Report that compared the Service to its peers, in particular, the thirteen fire and rescue services that made up Family Group 2. The report also provided a number of comparisons of ESFRS against demographic information and current performance measures, as well as organisational resourcing. The report contained information of the position as at 31 March 2015, other than the attendance time data which was for 2013/14.
- 997.3 The Chair commented on a very well set-out and comprehensive presentation of the statistics against the Family Group, and Councillor Peltzer Dunn was encouraged by the fall in the number of shifts lost to sickness. He asked whether additional information could be included to provide a more complete picture, such as age and vulnerability profiles with accidental dwelling fires; and the ethnic make-up of the population, when looking at the ethnic make-up of staff. Mrs. Ridley agreed to see what could be provided for next year's report.
- 997.4 Councillor Wincott asked whether actual numbers could be included to give a clearer picture of, for instance, the numbers of ethnic minority and female firefighters, and Councillor Barnes suggested including an arrow to show the direction of travel of the various comparators.
- 997.5 Councillor Barnes also suggested having a briefing at a future meeting of how the 'Family Group' is selected, and what characteristics are used – ACO Rolph agreed to bring this to a future Members' Seminar.
- 997.6 Councillor Howson was pleased to note the decrease in the number of false alarms, and asked whether the list of offenders was still maintained – Mrs. Ridley would look into this. He was also pleased to note that ESFRS ranked first for average response times, and wished to see this promoted as a positive outcome.
- 997.7 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

998. **2015/16 2ND QUARTER PERFORMANCE RESULTS**

- 998.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that presented a summary of service performance information for the second quarter of 2015/16. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 998.2 Councillor Wincott had been contacted by a number of firefighters concerned about the response to AFAs being reduced to one pump, following the Policy & Resources Panel's decision in May 2014. There had been a number of occasions when the first pump had arrived, to find 'persons reported', and then having to wait 8-10 minutes for a second pump.

- 998.3 The CFO&CE confirmed that firefighters had raised some concerns with him, and that officers were monitoring this on a monthly basis. He had also had discussions with the FBU regarding the development of a protocol to identify high risk premises, which would attract an increased pre-determined attendance to an AFA – this would take some time to develop and he would bring a report back to a future meeting of the Fire Authority. A report on a specific incident was due to come before Members at the February meeting of the Fire Authority.
- 998.4 Councillor Scott was encouraged by the CFO&CE's response and Councillor Barnes suggested that such discussions might be more appropriately directed to Members of the Policy & Resources Panel; the CFO&CE noted Councillor Barnes comments.
- 998.5 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked Mrs. Ridley to look into the way arrows are shown on the tables showing national quartile positions – these do not show up against the blue background.
- 998.6 **RESOLVED** – That
- (i) the 2015/16 performance results for Quarter 2 as set out in the report and complementary separate Appendix A be noted; and
 - (ii) the move to reporting average response times until the new standards are set with public and staff consultation through the Authority's next Integrated Risk Management Plan be approved.

999. **CORPORATE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES QUARTER 2 PROGRESS REPORT**

- 999.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that set out project and programme progress against key milestones, identified slippage, and reported compliance with project governance in terms of documentation. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 999.2 Members particularly noted:
- IMD Transformation is 61 days behind schedule.
 - SCC is waiting for confirmation of next steps.
 - HQ Move milestones have been added after the initial Programme Board meeting on 02/10/2015; programme management arrangements are behind schedule.
 - Newhaven Fire Station build progressing on schedule and on budget.
- 999.3 The ACFO explained that the IMD Transformation Project had slipped following changes to the Public Contracts Regulations earlier in the year. He confirmed that no additional costs had been incurred through the utilisation of a third party.
- 999.4 He also confirmed that Newhaven Fire Station was due to be 'handed over' week commencing 9 November 2015, with a ceremony on 7 December, and occupation earmarked for the first week in January 2016.
- 999.5 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

001. **2015/16 2nd QUARTER CORPORATE RISK REGISTER REVIEW**

001.1 Members considered a report of the Treasurer that reported on the latest quarterly review of Corporate Risk and sought agreement of the outcomes. (Copy in Minute Book).

001.2 **RESOLVED** – That the latest Corporate Risk Register be approved.

002. **EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME (ESMCP) UPDATE**

002.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that provided an update following the initiation of the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) and future steps. (Copy in Minute Book).

002.2 **RESOLVED** – That the update report following the initiation of the ESMCP project that will replace the FireLink contract be noted.

003. **IMD TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME PROGRESS**

003.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that advised the Panel of the progress of the IMD Transformation Programme. (Copy in Minute Book).

003.2 **RESOLVED** – That the progress of the programme be noted.

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

004.1 **RESOLVED** – That item number 005 be exempt under paragraphs 2 & 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 and accordingly is not open for public inspection on the grounds that it includes (para 2) information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual and (para 3) information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The Panel meeting concluded at 10:45 hours

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2016