

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 15 September 2016.

Members Present: Councillors Buchanan, Galley, Lambert, Peltzer Dunn, Penn, Scott, and Taylor.

N.B. Councillor Scott attended the meeting in place of Councillor Wincott, following his resignation from the Panel, and as approved by the Deputy Monitoring Officer. Councillor Barnes also attended the meeting.

Also present:

Mr. G. Walsh (Chief Fire Officer), Ms. D. Whittaker (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), Mr. M. Andrews (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), Ms. L. Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mr. D. Savage (Assistant Director Resources / Treasurer), Mrs. L. Ridley (Assistant Director Planning & Improvement), Mr. M. O'Brien (Assistant Director Operational Support & Resilience), Ms. M. Gilbert-King (Temporary Assistant Director Safer Communities), Mr. P. King and Mr. K. McGrath (Ernst & Young Auditors), Mr. R. Sutton and Ms. J. Knightley (East Sussex County Council), and Mrs. S. Klein (Clerk).

040. **DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

040.1 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.

041. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

041.1 **RESOLVED** That Councillor Lambert be appointed Chair of the Panel for the remainder of the civic year.

042. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

042.1 There were no apologies for absence.

043. **NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT / CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

043.1 Paul King and Kris McGrath (Ernst & Young Auditors), and Ross Sutton and Jo Knightley (East Sussex County Council) were welcomed to the meeting.

044. **NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY & AUDIT PANEL MEETING HELD ON 26 MAY 2016**

044.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel held on 26 May 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. (Copy in Minute Book).

045. **CALLOVER**
- 045.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:
- 046. External Auditor's Audit Results Report (ISA 260) and Statement of Accounts 2015/16
 - 047. Fatal Fire Report 2015 – 2016
 - 050. 2016/17 First Quarter Corporate Projects & Programmes Report
- 045.2 **RESOLVED** – That all other reports be resolved in accordance with the recommendations as detailed below.
046. **EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S AUDIT RESULTS REPORT (ISA 260) AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2015/16**
- 046.1 Members considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Director Resources / Treasurer that presented the results of the External Auditor's Results Report (ISA 260) and reported an unqualified opinion on the Authority's 2015/16 Statement of Accounts. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 046.2 The Chair welcomed Paul King, Kris McGrath, Ross Sutton and Jo Knightley to the meeting. Mr King thanked Mr Sutton and Ms Knightley, who had assisted Mr Savage and Mr Tricker with the preparation of the Authority's Statement of Accounts for 2015/16 and confirmed that he had no issues that needed to be brought to Members' attention. All work was now complete, subject to the adoption of the Financial Statements, and the Statement of Accounts could now be published.
- 046.3 The Chair echoed Mr King's thanks to the officers and acknowledged the challenge in meeting the accelerated timetable. Mr King explained that the new regulations required the 2017/18 Accounts to be published by the end of July 2018, so Ernst & Young planned to bring forward the audit of the 2016/17 accounts for completion by mid-August 2017, to ease the transition to the new timetable.
- 046.4 **RESOLVED** – That:
- i the External Auditor's Audit Results 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 be approved for publication.
047. **FATAL FIRE REPORT 2015 – 2016**
- 047.1 Members considered a report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer that informed them of details of the fatal fires in East Sussex which occurred during 2015/16. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 047.2 Councillor Galley commended the report as a 'good news' story, with a reduction in accidental dwelling fire deaths to two, but asked what lessons were being learned about dealing effectively with high risk groups.

- 047.3 The ACFO confirmed that the reduction in deaths was a result of continued hard work by the Service and increased partnership working to identify those at the most risk. More work was being undertaken to establish trends in accidental dwelling fires, and the Business Fire Safety department had identified an increased trend in care home and sheltered housing fires, which they were addressing. CFOA would also be providing national guidance for sheltered housing managers from early 2017.
- 047.4 Councillor Scott wanted to see more sharing of information between the Services, especially regarding domestic violence and the risk of fires, and the ACFO confirmed that more partnership work was taking place with social housing providers to improve relationships. The CFO was meeting with Police on 19 September and would discuss further sharing of information regarding these and other risks. The ACFO also confirmed that high rise blocks were constructed in a way to prevent the spread of fires between flats, which would help protect vulnerable people living in these blocks, although more could be done to inform landlords of their duties to inform tenants of what to do in the event of a fire.
- 047.5 Councillor Penn commended the report, and recognised the work needed in dealing with vulnerable people with mental health issues. She noted the information sharing agreement with East Sussex Adult Social Care and asked whether there was a similar agreement with Brighton & Hove City Council; Ms Gilbert-King confirmed that the Service has a very good working relationship with THE City of Brighton & Hove. The CFO also informed Members of a new Director's post in the City Council leading on Adult Social Care & Public Health. This post was a key position which would enable closer working between the Service and the City Council.
- 047.6 Councillor Peltzer Dunn suggested replacing the word **Grand** (Total) with **Overall** (Total) in Appendix A to the report and asked what the 'other' causes of fire were in the appendix, as these amounted to 35% of all fires. The ACFO explained that the fire investigation process starts when notification of a fire is received and, in some instances, it is challenging to identify the cause of the fire. He agreed that 35% was a large number and would be looking to see how these could be better identified. Councillor Peltzer Dunn suggested that those should that could not be identified should be classified as 'unknown', rather than 'other'.
- 047.7 Councillor Taylor was concerned about fires in care homes. These used to be inspected by the Fire & Rescue Service, but were now inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) who, he felt, were not qualified to look at homes in the same way as the FRS. The ACFO explained that the CQC was a key partner, with whom information was shared, and the Service was upskilling their inspectors to take a closer look at the risks.
- 047.8 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted

048. **2015/16 STATEMENT OF OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE**

048.1 Members considered a report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer that presented the Statement of Operational Assurance 2015/16 for approval. (Copy in Minute Book).

048.2 **RESOLVED** – That:

- i ESFRS's Statement of Operational Assurance be approved for formal sign off by the Chair of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel and the Chief Fire Officer; and
- ii next year's Operational Assurance Statement be included within the Annual Governance Statement report and reflects the new guidance to be issued by the Home Office.

049. **2016/17 FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT**

049.1 Members considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer that presented the first quarter performance results 2016/17. (Copy in Minute Book).

049.2 **RESOLVED** – That the following be noted:

- i the 2016/17 performance results for Quarter 1 as set out in the report and complementary separate Appendix A, and the information included within the exceptions report set out as Appendix B;
- ii that the report contains the rationalised list of indicators, as agreed by the Fire Authority in June 2016 – the list has been reduced to 21 indicators from 36;
- iii that it was also agreed at the June Fire Authority meeting that the majority of the indicators would be reported as measures and that targets would only be reported for two indicators; and
- iv that the list will be reviewed again once more is known about the Home Office proposals for a national indicator set as part of the ongoing Fire reform.

050. **2016/17 FIRST QUARTER CORPORATE PROJECTS & PROGRAMMES REPORT**

050.1 Members considered a report of the Assistant Director Planning & Improvement that reported on the latest quarterly review of Corporate Projects and Programmes. (Copy in Minute Book).

050.2 Councillor Galley raised a number of queries, as detailed below:

050.2.1 **SHQ relocation** – disposal strategy – had there been a change in the programmed time scales, currently shown as March 2017.

The Treasurer confirmed that there were a number of inter-dependencies and the vacation and subsequent disposal of SHQ was linked to the IMD Project and transfer of the existing data centre by the end of April 2017; March 2017 was still the target date for the move to Police HQ at Lewes. Proposals for the marketing of the current SHQ building were sought from suitable agents.

050.2.2 **Bridging the Savings Gap** – Riding at Standard and Project Management Office

Mr. O'Brien confirmed that 'Riding at Standard' was the alternative to 'Day Crewed Plus', which was proposed by firefighters, and was due to be fully implemented by 31 March 2018. It included changes to operational policies and procedures, numbers of firefighters on stations, overtime and how training is delivered.

Mrs. Ridley explained that there was currently a part time member of staff supporting a number of areas in the Project Management Office, but a full time Project Officer was being recruited which would enable more effective coordination of projects.

050.2.3 **Firewatch Phase 1 and Phase 2** – the ACFO explained that Firewatch is a software HR system, integrated with the Service's IT system to support and link with other systems throughout ESFRS. Phase 1 would initially be ready for the SCC and elements of the project had been well received. Phase 2 had not been started but would bring in other modules, such as Health & Safety, Engineering, etc.

050.3 Councillor Galley suggested it would be helpful to have a short description of each project within the report, as well as a final completion date. Mrs. Ridley confirmed that she would include this in future reports.

050.4 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

051. **2016/17 FIRST QUARTER CORPORATE RISK REGISTER REVIEW**

050.1 Members considered a report of the Assistant Director Resources / Treasurer that reported on the latest quarterly review of Corporate Risk and sought their agreement of the outcomes. (Copy in Minute Book).

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

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

052.1 **RESOLVED** – That item number 053 be exempt under paragraphs 1, 2 and 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 information relating to any individual, information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual, and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

053. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY & AUDIT PANEL MEETING HELD ON 26 MAY 2016 (EXEMPT CATEGORIES 1, 2 and 3)**

053.1 **RESOLVED** – That the confidential minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel held on 26 May 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. (Copy in Minute Book).

The meeting concluded at 10:52 hours

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2016

