

## **EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY**

**Minutes of the meeting of the SCRUTINY & AUDIT PANEL held at County Hall, St. Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex at 10:00 hours on Thursday, 2 November 2017.**

**Members Present:** Councillors Galley (Chairman), Lambert, Osborne, Peltzer Dunn, Sheppard and Taylor.

**Also Present:** Mr. M. Andrews (Interim Deputy Chief Fire Officer), Mr. M. O'Brien (Interim Assistant Chief Fire Officer), Ms. E. Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mr. D. Savage (Assistant Director – Resources/Treasurer), Mrs. L. Ridley (Assistant Director – Planning and Improvement), Mr. D. Drummond (Interim IT Manager), Mrs. S. Milner (Performance Analyst), Cllr J Barnes (Chair of the Fire Authority), Mrs. K. Ward (Clerk to the Fire Authority), A Blanshard (Senior Clerk to the Fire Authority)

### **120 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

120.1 It was noted that, in relation to matters on the agenda, no participating Member had any interest disclosable in accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct for Members.

### **121 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

121.1 None.

### **122 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT / CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

122.1 The Chairman informed Members that this was Kirsty's last meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel. The Chairman thanked Kirsty for all the hard work and support that she had given to Members and Officers and wished her well in her new career.

### **123 NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY & AUDIT PANEL MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2017**

123.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel held on 14 September 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (Copy in Minute Book).

### **124 CALLOVER**

124.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

- 126 Governance Review Proposal
- 127 IT Strategy Update
- 128 Performance Report 2017/18 – Quarter 2
- 129 Corporate Projects Progress Report 2017/18 – Quarter 2

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

**125**     **ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER**

125.1     Members considered, on behalf of the Fire Authority, a report of the Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer which consulted the Panel on the recently published Annual Audit Letter. (Copy in Minute Book).

125.2     **RESOLVED** – That the Panel approve, on behalf of the Fire Authority, the recently published Annual Audit Letter 2016/17.

**126**     **GOVERNANCE REVIEW PROPOSAL**

126.1     Members received the report of the Interim Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Interim ACFO) which outlined the options and scope for an independent review of governance arrangements of the East Sussex Fire Authority. (Copy in Minute Book).

126.2     The Interim ACFO reminded Members that the Fire Authority had requested a review be conducted into political and organisational governance arrangements in place across the Authority and in relation to East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service.

126.3     The Interim ACFO explained that the purpose of the review was to explore the application and effectiveness of current governance practice, structures and procedures. The review would be designed to assess whether the existing Authority and Panel structure remained fit for purpose and whether the Authority's governance arrangements were well designed and properly executed.

126.4     The Interim ACFO informed members that a "Member Reference Group" had been established and that the group had considered and refined the suggested key lines of enquiry, outlined in Appendix A to the report. These were presented to the Panel for consideration and comment. If agreed, these would form the basis of the review. Given the implications of the review, it was proposed that a report would be presented to the next meeting of the Fire Authority requesting approval to commence the review.

126.5     The Panel were informed that once approval had been given by the Fire Authority, then Officers would conduct a tender process to find a partner who would provide the necessary capacity, expertise and independence to conduct the review.

126.6     A discussion followed and Members suggested that under point 16 of Appendix A, officers should consider including a specific reference to member training on Scrutiny. It was also requested that Members be sent the draft tender document prior to the procurement process commencing. The Interim ACFO agreed that the document would be shared by email with Members for comment.

126.7     **RESOLVED** – That the Panel:

- i)     considered the contents of the report; and
- ii)    recommended the broad scope of the proposed review to the Fire Authority; and

- iii) directed officers to progress the review on the basis of the proposed way forward; and
- iv) agreed that members be sent the draft Tender document for comment prior to publication.

## **127 IT STRATEGY UPDATE**

- 127.1 Members received the report of the Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer (ADR/T) updating the Panel on the progress achieved against the delivery of the IT Strategy. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 127.2 The Interim IT Manager reminded Members that the Fire Authority had approved the new IT Strategy, which formed part of the IMD (Information Management Department) Transformation Programme, in June 2017, he explained that the purpose of the report was to update the Panel with the delivery progress of the strategy and to give Members the opportunity to request that additional information be included in future reports.
- 127.3 The Report contained details of the stages of the project that had been delivered, were in progress or those that currently were in the business case development phase. The Interim IT Manager explained that the next tranche of projects were at the time of the meeting being considered by CMT and would be brought to a future meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel.
- 127.4 The Interim IT Manager explained to Members the highlights and lowlights of the project since the start of the year. Members were told that the Transformation was now almost complete, significant changes had been made and for the most part the response had been positive. The IT support of the HQ relocation had successfully concluded. The Sussex Control Centre Project IT was now tracking towards being in position to complete on 29 November 2017.
- 127.5 The Interim IT Manager informed the Panel that business cases were being developed regarding performance management, Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Flexible working capabilities had been extended and the Information Technology Governance (ITG) team working to ensure that where possible officers were enabled to work anywhere.
- 127.6 The Interim IT Manager explained to Members that the lowlights had largely involved project delays. Business Case development had been slower than expected and the Panel were assured that steps had been taken to address this and to provide greater speed in this area.
- 127.7 The Panel were told that this update had been largely focussed on issues surrounding project delivery. The next update report would include details on financial issues. The Interim IT Manager then invited Members to ask for more information on the contents of the report.
- 127.8 Members queried the status of some specific projects outlined in the Appendix to the report. Cllr Barnes queried the status of the Body Worn Cameras project. The Interim

IT Manager explained that the project had been presented to CMT at its October meeting and it had been decided not to proceed with the proposed approach. It was now with the business owner to decide whether to resubmit.

127.9 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel:

- i) acknowledged the progress made against delivering the IT Strategy ; and
- ii) agreed that the report had provided feedback on the content and format of the report and that it met the needs of the Panel.

## **128 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017/18 – QUARTER 2**

128.1 Members considered the report of the Assistant Director Planning & Improvement (ADPI) which provided the Panel with a summary of service performance information for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of 2017/18.

128.2 The ADPI informed the Panel that the report showed a marked improvement against the previous quarter. The performance for quarter 2 had shown a decline in five areas against the previous year, three of which were showing a greater than 10% decline and had therefore been detailed in Appendix B to the report.

128.3 The ADPI reminded Members that at the last meeting of the Scrutiny and Audit Panel there had been a request that more information on sickness be included in the exceptions report as it was a priority area and one that was proving challenging to reduce. Members appreciated the inclusion of sickness, and looked forward to future reports containing more detail on the types of sickness which would make the figures more meaningful. The Panel asked for clarification on the number of employees who were currently on a phased return to work. The ADPI agreed to find this figure out to let members know.

128.4 Members voiced a concern that although there had been improvement on a number of categories, the figures suggested that the service was still in the worst quartile nationally. The ADPI reminded the Members that the report was very much a snapshot in time and that the national returns for 2016/17 had only just been received and that this report had been based on the return for 2015/16. The figures would be re-done to give a more accurate comparison. The Panel agreed that it would be easier to review our position when the new national figures were available.

128.5 The Panel discussed the number of Home Safety Visits completed in this quarter. The Panel asked whether safety checks on tumble dryers were included in the visits and if this was being well promoted, in particular on social media. The Interim DCFO confirmed that discussions around white goods were included in discussions at the visits. Members were informed that the public were directed towards the “Register My Appliance” website where they can register their white goods by serial number. Manufacturers use this site to contact people directly who own items set for safety recall. The Interim DCFO informed Members that, following the Grenfell Tower Fire, lobbying was underway for a better, national recall system. In addition to this, both the Home Safety Visits and ESFRS website provided simple safety tips including not to leave tumble dryers and washing machines running over night.

- 128.6 The Panel requested some clarification on our national quartile position for indicator 14 “undertake 10,000 Home Safety Visits”. The Report showed that, despite performance improving, we were in the worst sector nationally. The Panel wondered if other services were doing more, and whether this might be a matter of policy rather than performance.
- 128.7 The Interim DCFO explained that as, previously addressed, due to the lack of current figures, the report referenced 2015/16 national figures. There was a direct correlation between the number of Home Safety Visits and the number of Accidental Dwelling Fires. There had been a reduction over the past 10 years. ESFRS was targeting the most vulnerable in the community and not just the elderly. There were to be changes in the style of the Home Safety Visits, to become a “safe and well” visit. The Accidental Dwelling fire team were looking to retain the quality of our existing visits, but increase the possibility of benchmarking these against other authorities.
- 128.8 Members were interested as to why there was no mention of the Service’s work surrounding Road Safety and whether the preventative work could be recorded. The Performance Analyst explained that the current report was based on the information that had been requested. The figures for the work of the Safer Communities team was sent to the Home Office each month. The service was on average only called to attend one third of road traffic collisions and this figure was only reported internally, she agreed that any available figures relating to road safety would be included in future reports.
- 128.9 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel:
- i) noted the performance results for Quarter 2 of 2017/18; and
  - ii) requested further information to be included in future Performance reports including, Policy implications resulting from performance measures, details on work into Road Safety and related issues, more detail on the reasons for sickness absences and phased returns.

## **129 CORPORATE PROJECTS PROGRESS REPORT 2017/18 – QUARTER 2**

- 129.1 Members received the report of the Interim Assistant Chief Fire Officer which provided information on the progress of the corporate projects during Quarter 2 of 2017/18. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 129.1 The Panel queried why there had been a further delay to the service-wide rollout of procurement cards. The ADR/T explained that the delay had been the result of both capacity issues and also problems with the p-card software. A solution for the latter issue was currently undergoing testing and it was hoped that roll-out would be within the next couple of months. The ADR/T informed the Panel that the date could be confirmed after testing was complete, an update would be circulated in due course.
- 129.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel:
- i) noted the contents of the report; and

- ii) considered whether any further assurance was required on any of the projects reported upon.

**130      2017/18 SECOND QUARTER CORPORATE RISK REGISTER REVIEW**

130.1 Members considered the report of the Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer which outlined the 2017/18 Quarter 2 review of Corporate Risk. (Copy in Minute Book)

130.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel:

- i) approved the latest Corporate Risk Registers.

**131      2017/18 HEALTH AND SAFETY STATISTICS REPORT – QUARTER 2**

131.1 Members considered the report of the Assistant Director – Training & Assurance which presented the Panel with a summary of Health and Safety statistics for Quarter 2 2017/18. (Copy in Minute Book).

131.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel:

- i) noted the Quarter 2 Health and Safety statistics for 2017/18; and
- ii) would continue to monitor and scrutinise performance over the year.

**132      EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

132.1 **RESOLVED** – That items 133 and 134 be exempt under paragraph 3 and 7 of Schedule 12A to 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 financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) and that they include information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

The meeting concluded at 11:12 hours

Signed

Chairman

Dated this                      day of

2018

**ABRAHAM GHEBRE-GHIORGHIS**  
**Monitoring Officer**  
**East Sussex Fire Authority**  
**c/o Brighton & Hove City Council**