

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Meeting Scrutiny & Audit Panel

Date 22 July 2021

Title of Report Outcome of the Internal Audit into the Management of Operational Assets – 2019/20

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Background Papers N/A

Appendices Appendix 1 – Internal Audit Report

Implications

CORPORATE RISK	✓	LEGAL	
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	✓
FINANCIAL	✓	POLITICAL	
HEALTH & SAFETY		OTHER (please specify)	
HUMAN RESOURCES		CORE BRIEF	
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT			

PURPOSE OF REPORT To apprise the Fire Authority's Scrutiny & Audit Panel of the outcome of the recent internal audit undertaken into the Service's management of operational assets (2019/20).

To share the improvement plan to provide assurances to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel.

RECOMMENDATION That the Scrutiny & Audit Panel note the outcome of 'partial assurance' of the internal audit undertaken in to the Service's management of operational assets and be assured that an action plan for improvement has been developed.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service has a statutory duty to respond to emergencies. Operational assets are managed and maintained and must be readily available to allow the service to respond to emergencies 24/7, 365 days a year.
- 1.2 Operational assets consist of:
- appliances;
 - equipment held on appliances;
 - service vehicles;
 - breathing apparatus;
 - non mobile stores;
 - equipment held at the training centre; and
 - health & safety equipment.
- 1.3 ESFRS maintains an asset catalogue of approximately 16,000 items.
- 1.4 Management of operational assets covers the entire life cycle of owning and using an asset including:
- the identification of need;
 - procurement;
 - user acceptance testing and sign off;
 - operational use;
 - asset tracking;
 - maintenance and repairs; and
 - disposal at end of life.
- 1.5 This review was part of the agreed Internal Audit Plan for 2019/20 with a view to feed any learnings into the Fleet and Equipment Strategy which is currently going through the approval process as part of the broader Engineering improvement journey.
- 1.6 The purpose of the audit was to provide assurance that controls are in place to meet the following objectives:
- There are robust plans and processes in place for replacing existing assets at end of life and identifying new assets which considers the views and needs of all key stakeholders.
 - All new assets are subject to user acceptance testing and sign off.
 - All assets are used in accordance with management instructions and training.
 - All deployed assets are adequately monitored and tracked.
 - Assets are maintained and repaired in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements and within agreed service levels.
 - Budgets for asset management are regularly monitored and any variances are reported to management.
 - The service has relevant performance indicators in place to give assurance to management that assets are being managed and maintained effectively.
 - Assets are disposed of in compliance with policies and procedures at end of life.

1.5 **Partial Assurance** has been provided in respect to how the Service manages its Operational Assets. This opinion means that there are weaknesses in the system of control and/or the level of non-compliance is such as to put the achievement of the system or service objectives at risk.

1.6 The audit highlighted seven areas for improvement, one of which is deemed to be a major control weakness requiring attention and therefore highlighted as a 'red risk.'

A follow-up audit will take place later this financial year.

2. **ACTION PLAN**

2.1 Page 6 onwards of the audit report (appendix 1) articulates an improvement plan and how the Engineering team are working to improve the policies, processes and systems as well as sharpening up terms of reference for particular meetings.

2.2 In relation to the one red risk, this is currently being actioned through the completion of the new Fleet & Equipment Strategy, due to be presented to the Fire Authority for formal sign off in September 2021. The Strategy identifies the requirement for a whole life asset cycle from concept design through to disposal and will enable better alignment with procurement through the existing Category Strategy and Action Plan.

2.3 Much of the work outlined in the amber sections of the action plan has already commenced, however, due to the retirements of key members of staff and on-boarding new staff (including the Joint Head of Function with West Sussex Fire) some of those timelines have slipped slightly.

2.4 It should be noted that most actions should be completed by the end of 2021 and forms part of the broader Engineering Improvement Plan that is currently being progressed.