

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Audit and Performance Management Committee
held in the Oak Room, Headquarters, Shrewsbury
on Thursday, 20 September 2018 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Hosken, Mellings (Vice-Chair), Milner and Sahota (Chair)

Officers

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Andy Johnson	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	DCFO
Dave Myers	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
James Walton	Treasurer	
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Ged Edwards	Planning, Performance and Communications Manager	PPCM
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Neil Griffiths	Group Manager	GM
Rabinder Dhami	Prevention Manager	PM
Malcolm Stevenson	Communications Manager	CM
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

External Bodies

Mr Jones	Grant Thornton, External Audit
Mr Chadderton	Audit Services, Shropshire Council

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Pinter and Price

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

4 Minutes

Councillor Milner abstained from voting as he was not present at the meeting.

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 19 July 2018, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

5 External Audit Annual Audit Letter

The Committee received the External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter, which summarised the key findings of the work carried out for the year ended 31 March 2018.

Mr Jones presented the letter to the Committee and advised that the main finding of the audit was that the Authority had a 'clean bill of health'.

Members asked for assurance that a copy of the letter would be forwarded to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The Chair stated that he had no objection to this but queried for what purpose this would be done. Members felt that it was important to stress that this Authority is financially efficient and this document provides evidence in support of this. The CFO undertook to work with the Chair of Committee on a suitable covering letter.

Resolved that the Committee note the Annual Audit Letter for the Year Ended 31 March 2018.

Councillor Mellings arrived at this point (2.10 pm)

6 Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2018/19

This report summarised the progress made to date against the improvements contained in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) Improvement Plan 2018/19.

The PPCM presented the report and talked through each of the areas of review contained in the Appendix. The PPCM also advised that the Systems / Infrastructure area of review would be covered in more detail in the Risk Management paper later on this agenda.

With regard to Building Facilities, the PPCM advised that Clun is due to be handed back to the Service and that work has started on Much Wenlock station. The PPCM also reported that the tender has been issued for the architect for the Telford Central project. It is hoped that architect will be appointed by the end of October at which point the project timetable will be reviewed and amended if necessary. Members asked what the anticipated completion date for the Telford Project is. The PPCM advised that it is difficult to say. The projected start date for the project is July 2019 but this needs to be reviewed and adjusted to take account of delays.

Resolved that the Committee note the progress made against each of the improvements contained in the Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2018/19.

7 Annual Review 2017/18

This report presented the draft Annual Review (also known as the Annual Statement of Assurance) for 2017/18 and gave the Committee an opportunity to make comment on the draft, prior to its going forward to the full Fire Authority for consideration and approval.

The ACFO introduced this report and explained that the Annual Review incorporates a backwards looking review of the last 12 months and a forward looking statement of the Service's intentions for the coming year. The Communications Manager then presented the Review to Members. He talked through the document and the following queries were raised by Members.

With regard to the data on numbers of incidents, Members queried the fact that the number of false alarms had stayed the same during 2016/17 and 2017/18. The DCFO explained that there has been a significant reduction in the number of false alarms but it is a challenge to reduce numbers further as the 'easy' premises have been tackled and large organisations eliminated which means it is now smaller businesses, which are sometimes harder to address, that need to be tackled. The DCFO also explained that the figure also includes false alarms with 'good intent', for example reports of controlled burning, and malicious false alarms although there has been a massive reduction in the latter over previous years.

Members then asked if there was a charge to multiple offenders for false alarms. The CFO responded that this Service does not but the law is open about whether charges can be made. The Service tends to play more on the disruption to business as the driver for reduction but has to be careful to ensure that businesses do not simply turn off alarms.

The link to the Annual Review will be emailed to Members by the Executive Support Officer.

Resolved that the Committee, having made comment on the draft Annual Review 2017/18, forward the Report to the Fire Authority for consideration and formal adoption

8 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This report was the latest of regular risk summary report, to the Audit and Performance Management Committee.

The PPCM presented the report and informed the Committee that there had been no new entries on the Corporate Risk Register since the last report to Committee. The PPCM then give the following brief report on progress with the changeover of the Human Resources (HR) and Finance systems.

Finance went live on the Agresso system (provided by Telford & Wrekin Council) in August with Samis being maintained for the interface into the payroll system. The payroll module has been built and is ready for testing.

Officers are meeting to discuss the testing regime next week and will also look at dual running arrangements. Data has been loaded into the HR module and is being cleansed. The Training module is being built in-house and the build for this commences next week. The go live date for these modules is 31 October 2018 but Shropshire Council have indicated that they can run the November payroll if required. Officers have decided to take advantage of this to give a longer testing period. In relation to retained duty system payments, FireServiceRota has been rolled out and employees can access this. Trials with regard to payments will now be undertaken. The Business Continuity Group has been monitoring all aspects of the changeover and has been receiving weekly project updates.

Referring to the Appendix to the report, Members queried why all the direction of travel arrows were currently in the same direction. The PPCM explained that officers do review the risk ratings but there is a number of criteria for each individual risk so they will stay at that level until all mitigation is complete.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

9 Risk Management Group Internal Audit Progress Monitoring Report

This report provided an update on the monitoring of recommendations made by Internal Audit, which is undertaken by the Risk Management Group. It specifically covered details about the progress made against outstanding recommendations.

The PPCM presented this report and highlighted section 4 on page 2 of the report which shows that the number of outstanding recommendations has reduced from 59 to 56 with 28 recommendations being addressed since the last report to this Committee.

The PPCM advised that officers have met with Internal Audit to discuss those outstanding risks that will be superseded with the move to the new finance and HR system.

Members asked for further detail on the 3 significant collaboration risks referred to on page 3 of the report. A discussion then took place to clarify the difference between a recommendation requiring attention and one that is significant. The PPCM was unable to provide the detail in the meeting but undertake to provide information to Members after the meeting.

Resolved that the Committee note

- a) The progress made against the outstanding recommendations; and
- b) That the Risk Management Group will continue to monitor progress against all recommendations, reporting to this Committee on a regular basis.

10 Performance Monitoring

10a Service Targets April to August 2018

This report presented a summary of the Service's performance for the period April to August 2018.

The DCFO presented the report and advised that the Appendix included increased information around trends as requested by the Committee. Currently three out of the seven Service Targets show improved performance with only two of the seven being on target for achievement.

The DCFO explained that in relation to the response targets, the Service is reassessing the risk profile to see if this is affecting performance. Performance against the deliberate fires target is a good news story with the Service currently being on course to meet this target. Performance in relation to the fire deaths target is good but the Service needs to look at reporting arrangements for those incidents where casualties are taken to hospitals outside the county.

The injuries to staff target is an area of concern as performance is currently behind target. It is not too far out but as the Service is looking for improved performance this could prove to be a challenge.

There is a lot of work to be done with regard to the room of origin target with performance currently not being on target. One issue is in relation to barn fires as if the incident involves an open-sided barn, the fire immediately goes outside, providing an anomaly. The CFO commented that this is an unusual target as it is quality assurance focused. It does give a measure of how effective the Service has been as a whole and enables officers to evaluate the effectiveness of the Service. The Service is currently running 3-4% above the national average for this target which may indicate that protection and prevention measures compensate for the increased attendance times in the county.

Resolved that the Committee note the report

10b Presentation on Service Targets

As agreed at the July 2016 meeting of the Committee, the Prevention Manager gave a presentation on the following 2018/19 Service Targets:

Accidental dwelling fires to be reduced to not more than 198 during 2018/19; and

All accidental dwelling fires (ADFs) will be reduced to not more than 462 in 2018/19

A copy of the presentation slides has been placed on the signed minute file for this Committee.

Members referred to the problems highlighted with private rented properties and suggested that Housing Benefit data may be able to help in addressing these issues. Members were also pleased to see the improvements in ADF figures for Woodside and other areas as shown in the presentation.

Members asked if the age of the building was taken into account as a risk factor. The PM responded that it is not at present but this may be worth looking at in future. The CFO added that it is the quality and maintenance of buildings that is more important when assessing ADF risks.

The CFO commented that the targets which were agreed three years ago are incredibly challenging but are set on a declining number, i.e. a 5% year on year reduction with a total reduction of 25% over five years. There is a danger that staff may start to become unmotivated if targets are moving away so it may become necessary to adjust targets in future to overcome this.

Resolved the Committee note the presentation

10c Wholetime and On Call (Retained Duty System) Performance Monitoring –Quarter 1 (April to June 2018) and July 2018

This report provided information regarding the ongoing performance and management in terms of the availability of Wholetime and On Call (Retained Duty System) appliances in Shropshire.

The GM presented the report and explained that recruitment is currently being addressed and a Task and Finish Group has been established to work on this. A priority matrix is being developed to allow targeting of recruitment. In addition, a national recruitment campaign has been launched and the Service Management Team has approved a sustainability review of the On-Call System in Shropshire, i.e. a 'Retained Review Part Two'. The GM tabled a station information sheet for Prees (copy attached to signed minutes) to the meeting as an example of the resources that are being produced to support recruitment.

The Appendix to the report was tabled to the meeting (copy attached to signed minutes). The GM talked through this highlighting the following:

- Bishops Castle have been unavailable due to a lack of Officer in Charge or a driver and action is being taken to address this
- Much Wenlock have recruits that are due to start the next On-Call training course
- The main issue at Clun is with crewing levels although it is hoped that the improvements to the fire station may attract more recruits as community interest in the station is raised.

Members asked if it would be better to highlight or compare those stations with poorer performance. The GM explained that these stations had been selected for inclusion this time as they had not been represented in reporting before and the GM wanted to highlight their excellent performance.

Resolved that the Committee note the report

11 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved that the Committee being satisfied in all the circumstances of the case that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing this information, formally resolve that the press and public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

12 Corporate Risk Management Summary (Paragraph 4)

The Committee received Appendix C to report 9 – Corporate Risk Management Summary, which was considered in closed session, as it contained exempt information.

Resolved that the Committee note exempt Appendix C to report 9.

The meeting closed at 3.40 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....